

The Task Force on Canadian Unity


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A Time to Speak
The Views of the Public



Government
Publications





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The Task Force on Canadian Unity

A Study of the
Government of Canada

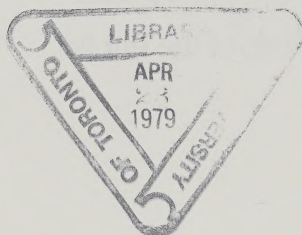
The Task Force on Canadian Unity

A Time to Speak
The Views of the Public

March, 1979

Canada Royal Commission

Official Publication



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Available in Canada through

Authorized Bookstore Agents
and other bookstores

or by mail from

Canadian Government Publishing Centre
Supply and Services Canada
Hull, Quebec, Canada K1A 0S9

Catalogue No. CP 32-35/1979-2
ISBN 0-660-10187-4

Canada: \$3.50
Other countries: \$4.20

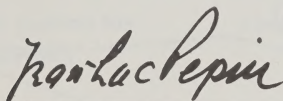
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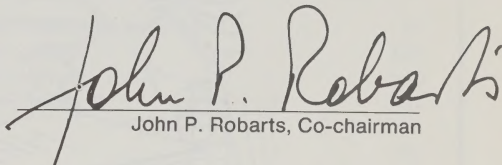
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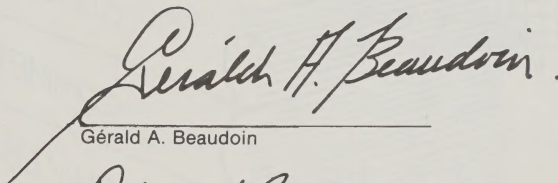


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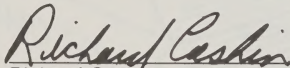


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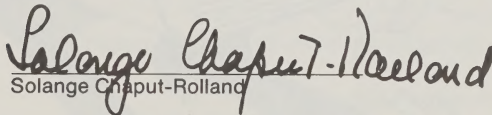
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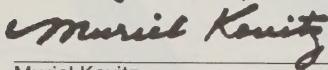
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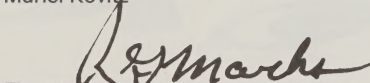
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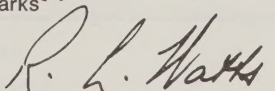
Solange Chaput-Rolland



Muriel Kovitz



Ross Marks



Ronald L. Watts



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“Ladies and Gentlemen of this committee, you have created high expectations in the people of Canada. Please do not prove these hopes false. Too often the people of Canada have been asked to express their views, only to find those views impressively and expensively printed, shelved and ignored. We look to you to compile a consensus of the Canadian imagination, to distill its ideas and define the framework of the Canada of the twenty-first century. Nothing less will do. Superficial and slight responses by you and our political leaders will only assist the promoters of disunity.”

(Committee for Community Government in Montreal)

The first part of the mandate we, the Commissioners of the Task Force on Canadian Unity, received from the Canadian government was to go to the public and to seek its views. This we did, with all the vigour and the goodwill at our command. In this volume, *A Time to Speak*, we report on what the Canadians who appeared before us had to say about their country, its problems and its prospects. The book is a citizen's report, as little influenced by our own personal judgements as we could make it.

In *A Future Together*, issued on January 25, 1979, we made our own "observations and recommendations," after carefully listening to the public for the better part of eight months, after a summer of intensive consultation with specialists and a fall of animated discussion among ourselves. In *Coming to Terms*, issued on February 4, 1979, we provided our fellow-citizens with a glossary which will be as helpful to them, we hope, in acquiring a better understanding of "the words of the debate," as it was to us in preparing it.

The Task Force on Canadian Unity was created on July 5, 1977 (See Appendix I for the mandate and the order-in-council), when six of the eight Commissioners were appointed. It held its first private meeting on July 12, 1977 and its first full meeting on August 31, after the appointment of the two Quebec Commissioners. At that time the co-chairmen, Jean-Luc Pepin (Ottawa) and John Roberts (Toronto), were joined by their six colleagues to form the full Commission. They were: Muriel Kovitz (Calgary), Ross Marks (Vancouver), John Evans (Toronto), Richard Cashin (St. John's), Solange Chaput-Rolland (Montreal), and Gérald Beaudoin (Hull). On February 28, 1978, John Evans resigned and was replaced by Ronald Watts (Kingston).

On September 22, 1977, we began our hearings. In the following months we were to visit fifteen cities: Halifax (September 22-23, 1977), Charlottetown (October 6-7, 1977), Regina (October 20-21, 1977), St. John's (October 27-28, 1977), Calgary and Edmonton (November 17-18-19, 1977), Quebec City (November 24-25, 1977), Toronto (November 28-29, 1977), Winnipeg (January 12-13, 1978), Montreal (January 16-17-18, 1978), Moncton (January 30-31, 1978), Vancouver (February 8-9, 1978), Ottawa (March 1-2-3, 1978), Whitehorse and Yellowknife (April 2 to 7, 1978).

Between the full Task Force hearings, the members criss-crossed their respective regions on "mini-tours." The public meetings were closely followed and extensively covered by the local and national media. In many cities, cable TV carried the entire hearings live. Hundreds of newspaper articles, television and radio programs were based on them.

During and between these visits, we had countless private meetings; we gave speeches and interviews analyzing "what was said", and we took part in "hot line" broadcasts, receiving and commenting on the opinions and questions of private citizens to the best of our ability.

In each of the cities which the Task Force visited, the Commissioners and staff received invaluable support and advice from local volunteers (see Appendix E). These were the men and women who set aside their normal responsibilities and contributed their knowledge, time, energy and enthusiasm to assist the Task Force in its efforts to meet with as many Canadians as possible.

These local volunteers were an integral part of our national tour. We could not have done what we did, or learned what we learned about our country without their help. They brought us face-to-face with the individuals and groups who had so much to say, found us a place to meet, presided at the sessions, and opened their hearts, and on many occasions, their homes to us. It was also a wonderful source of moral support to know that when we got off the plane in St. John's, Vancouver, Quebec or Yellowknife we would be met by fellow citizens who shared with us a love and concern for our country. To them must go much of the credit for the overall success of the tour.

Our meetings generally followed a standard pattern. The morning and afternoon sessions were relatively formal occasions during which groups and specialists had an opportunity to present prepared positions and answer some of our specific questions. These were the sessions when representatives of native peoples, community organizations, minority groups, labour unions; educators, clergymen, businessmen, politicians, lawyers, economists, political scientists; persons concerned with education, culture, the arts, and the media and many others appeared

before the Task Force. The presentation of briefs (see Appendix D) usually proceeded calmly, even when the participants held opposed points of view.

The evening sessions, in contrast, were spontaneous. Members of the general public who participated were heard, not only by the Task Force Commissioners and other members of the audience, but often by the much wider audiences provided by radio and television. These sessions were frank and frequently turbulent, giving participants the opportunity to air their views on any number of issues related to life in Canada today. People took the opportunity to express publicly what they had been reflecting on for years, or to react on the spot to what other people had just said. Generally, the thoughtfulness and the passion were equally impressive; it was readily apparent that many Canadians were aware that they had reached a crossroads in their history. In all cases, we, the Commissioners, had the opportunity to "sum up" at the end of the meetings, stating, in equally frank terms, our reactions to some of the things that had been said.

None of us would pretend for a minute that there were no difficult or disheartening moments during the tour, but it was a richly informative experience for us all, and one which helped structure our thinking and which profoundly affected the second part of our mandate, the expression of our own thoughts. Indeed, *A Time to Speak* is closely linked to the two other publications of the Task Force.

Our second publication is a glossary of political and social terms and a description of the Canadian institutions and a brief analysis of the options from which Canadians will have to choose. The preparation of such a glossary was a direct result of our experience during our cross-country tour. Throughout our hearings we were struck by the degree of confusion, and even conflict, which was introduced in the discussions through a lack of common understanding or agreement about the meaning of some of the basic terms being used and the nature of some of the institutions referred to. As we became increasingly conscious of that fact, we became convinced of the need for a special type of dictionary. It seemed to us that one of the useful contributions the Task Force could make to Canadian unity was the preparation of a handy but comprehensive guide to the words and concepts most commonly used in the discussion of our country's future. The result is *Coming to Terms: the Words of the Debate*.

There is also a close link between *A Time to Speak* and the Task Force's first publication, *A Future Together*. It was the experience of our tours and hearings, and the awareness gained through some 900 briefs and close to 3,000 letters addressed to the Task Force, which helped us to develop and refine the basic outlook and assumptions which guided the preparation of our observations and recommendations.

Of course, not every one who spoke or wrote to us will find his or her views in *A Future Together*, though many will. In developing our own thinking, we had not only to reflect opinions expressed at the hearings and in our further discussions with specialists, but to decide on the policy positions which we judged to be the best, both for the immediate future and for the years to come. It was, however, by reference to the whole sum and spectrum of what we heard that we were able to agree upon the general direction of our work, and especially upon our three fundamental principles of duality, regionalism and the sharing of power and benefits, which are the foundation of our more specific observations and recommendations. Our work on *A Time to Speak*, served also, as we prepared our other reports, to keep us conscious of what we had heard and seen in our travels throughout Canada.

Our own impressions and perceptions of public opinion are described in *A Future Together* and there is no need to repeat them here. Indeed we should not, for the present volume is the place for Canadians to speak for themselves. We would like to end our work as Commissioners as we began it: listening to individual Canadians speak about themselves and about their country. What they will have to say from now on will determine both the fate of our recommendations and the future of the country.

We have planned *A Time to Speak* to allow the voice of the people to express itself as clearly and as systematically as possible. We have divided it into five parts that correspond most closely to the major themes developed before us: "The Communities," "The Search for Identity," "Quebec," "Economic Life," "Politics and the Constitution." Within the parts, we have organized the material

Preface

into twenty chapters, which cover sub-themes of major importance. In the beginning of each chapter we provide some background information about the issues discussed. We then reproduce the range of opinions and proposals which were expressed, together with selected quotations from briefs and oral presentations, in order to give the reader the "feel" of contact with the participants at the hearings.

This volume is not a Gallup poll: it counts ideas, not heads, though it tries to indicate in general terms — "many," "some," "a few" — the relative frequency with which the opinions and proposals were expressed. Again, its purpose is to present a synthesis of the concerns, suggestions and recommendations of our fellow citizens as delivered to the Commissioners. We identify the authors of written statements and the comments of politicians. In other cases, we use "in" ("in Regina" or "in Quebec City") to indicate comments made at the hearings and "from" ("from Vancouver" or "from Halifax") to indicate quotations taken from correspondence.

Here, then, is *A Time to Speak*. To those who shared their time and spoke with us, we extend our deepest appreciation. We dedicate this report to them with our sincere gratitude.

MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE ON CANADIAN UNITY



Introduction

It is natural for individuals to group together and form communities on the basis of common characteristics and shared social, economic and political objectives. This happens everywhere. In Canada, two factors of group formation, although essentially positive, have led to particular tensions. One is *ethnicity*, the other, *regionalism*. The first has to do with ancestry, language and culture; the second, while geographical in framework, emphasizes economics and politics.

As a result of the first factor, Canada has two major communities, the English and the French, often referred to as the “two founding peoples.” In fact, this “duality,” discussed in chapter 1, is defined not only by “ethnicity,” but also by history, law, politics and, to a lesser degree, by economics. The languages of these major communities are “official languages,” recognized as such to a limited extent by the British North America Act of 1867, and more extensively, at the federal level, by the Official Languages Act of 1969. Chapter 2 deals with the status of English and French in Canada.

Each of these major communities finds itself, however, in a minority situation in some areas, the English in Quebec, the French in the other provinces. Even then, their members receive, in varying degrees from one province to another, education and other public services in their own language. Chapters 4 and 5 present the respective situations of these major linguistic minority groups.

There are also in Canada ethno-cultural groups composed of individuals who have themselves come, or whose ancestors came, from neither anglophone nor francophone countries. They invoke the principles of cultural freedom as the basis for retaining some of their inherited cultures. Their testimony is related in chapter 6.

The Indians, the Métis and the Inuit, whose forefathers inhabited North America centuries before the French and the English, form another type of Canadian grouping, the native communities. They have land claims, some confirmed, some still under negotiation, and they assert a right to the retention of their cultures. Chapter 3 is given over to a discussion of the native communities in Canada.

Although these communities and groups are present in most parts of the country, some are concentrated in certain areas, for example, the French in Quebec, the Inuit in the north and a number of ethno-cultural groups in Ontario and the west.

But the description of communities in Canada does not stop there. Geography and history combine with culture and economic and political interests to produce regional communities as well. There is constant competition among them for the exercise of power and the distribution of benefits; witness the debates on representation in federal institutions and on a host of economic subjects, e.g., tax revenue sharing, transportation and tariff rates, resource-processing and industrialization. Chapter 7 outlines the problems posed by regionalism in Canada.

In forming a single state in 1867, the hope was to balance these diversities of ethnicity and region with common interests uniting the political entities and the communities. This balance was to be achieved through a federal political system, a two-tier form of government. Generally speaking, the central government would pursue objectives common to all regions and communities; provincial governments would foster more particular interests.

In fact, from the beginning there have been tensions in the social, economic and political systems of Canada, occasionally leading to confrontations. They may now have reached a peak.

How do Canadians feel about their communities in 1977-78? How do they see present and future relationships? Can these communities be made to coexist in greater harmony? The Task Force has heard the views of many individual citizens and organizations, as well as some government spokesmen, on these questions.

Background

Duality

The English and French character of Canada was acknowledged to some extent shortly after the British conquest by the Act of Quebec in 1774. Breaking away from the colonial traditions of the time, the British Parliament guaranteed French Canadians respect for their religion and civil law.

Assimilation of the French was never firm British policy, although it was still recommended by Lord Durham to the Imperial government as late as 1839.

Legally, at least, that matter was settled when the British North America Act, which in 1867 established a federal system of government, guaranteed to Quebec: provincial autonomy, confessional schools and some official use of French in the central government.

For a hundred years after 1867, English-French relations nevertheless went through very trying periods. No clear definition of duality, no clear policy describing how it could or should be implemented in institutions and practices could be agreed upon.

By the 1960s, some segments of French-speaking Canada had begun to doubt the value of pursuing "the Canadian experiment." It is in this context that, in 1963, Prime Minister Pearson created the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. Departing from the imprecision that had traditionally been associated with the concept of duality, he instructed the Commission "to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of equality between the two founding races" ("peuples" in the French version). Its reports influenced, among many other aspects of duality, the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969. Since then, this statute has been the subject of public debate in which it is not easy to separate substance from semantics.

Expressions of duality

Expressions of the English-French duality in Canadian public life are found in the federal Official Languages Act and in provincial provisions for education and other government services. The concept is also reflected in the structures of federal institutions, such as the English and French services of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and of the National Film Board, and the convention of alternating mother tongue in the making of certain appointments, notably that of governor general and speakers of the House of Commons and the Senate.

Duality is also expressed in the private sector (in the operations of many professional associations, voluntary organizations and social clubs, for example), and in the use of French as the main language of work in businesses located in French-speaking areas.

The treatment of duality affects the country's social and political climate. It has occasionally provoked major crises, as in the school questions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the conscription issues in the two world wars and the air controllers' strike of 1976.

Population statistics

The percentage of total population represented by Canadians of French origin* has remained relatively stable — 31.1 per cent shortly after Confederation, and 28.7 per cent in 1971. The percentage of those of British origin has decreased from 60.5 per cent to 44.6 per cent in the same period.

* According to Statistics Canada, the term "origin" refers to ethnic or cultural background, traced through the father's side. It should not be confused with citizenship, which refers to the country to which a person owes allegiance.



THE BABYSITTERS

When one looks at the use of languages, however, a different picture emerges. The community of those who claim English as a mother tongue has maintained itself since 1931 at about 60 per cent of the total population, while the French-speaking community has hardly changed in the same period, accounting for 25.6 per cent of the population in 1976. These figures indicate a considerable influx of non-English, non-French immigrants into the English linguistic stream.

Questions

Is the principle of duality accepted by Canadians, particularly when defined as "equality between the two founding peoples"? How is it understood?

“French Canadians have always been deeply convinced that it was an alliance or a treaty between both races. Besides, Cartier, Macdonald, Brown, Darcy McGee and all the Fathers of Confederation said so.”

(Roch Lasalle, member of Parliament, in Montreal)

“The first mistake is to try to build Canada as a partnership of two founding races instead of building Canada on the unity of all Canadians. Canadians should realize that the concept of two founding races is a myth.”

(James Richardson, member of Parliament, in Winnipeg)

“Under what conditions is Canada to exist? Only on a 50-50 basis. This is the only condition to have a bi-national Canada, although I suppose that all Canadians would laugh if such a proposition were submitted to them.”

(in Montreal)

“I live in Halifax. I'm a citizen of Canada and the kind of Canada that will suit me best is one where French-speaking people are comfortable. A hundred years ago, a deal was made. Now, a deal is a deal, and I believe that the French-speaking citizens of this country do not feel that the deal has been fulfilled. I agree with them.”

(in Halifax)

“We have had trouble in this country because of a lack of respect. Both languages have not been treated equally, nor have our founding peoples.”

(in Montreal)

“May I suggest you scrap all this crap about two founding languages and concentrate on being Canadians. One country, one flag, one people.”

(from Minnedosa, Manitoba)

“In my youth and until I reached 50 years of age, I had been told that Canada was made up of two nations. John Diefenbaker was the first one to rob me of the pride I felt in belonging to the French nation of Canada. He said, 'There is but *one* nation.' That was the end of it. But then we elected the Liberal party with Lester B. Pearson. He recognized that there were two nations. I felt my pride coming back. And then Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a Scotsman, had to come along and state, as Diefenbaker had, that there was but one nation in Canada. By doing this, he put an end to the two-nation thesis. That's the reason people as old as I am, who remember these events, will say, 'Yes!' to the referendum. You have to go back to the two-nation concept; otherwise, that's the end of Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“The old notion of two nations struggling within the bosom of a single state may have been an apt description of the 1840s when Lower and Upper Canada were united and alone. But then they cajoled the maritimers to join in their struggle, filled the west with people who knew nothing of this venerable dispute, and accepted Newfoundland to share in the sorrow and the promise. There is a French-speaking nation in Quebec, an English-speaking nation in southern Ontario, but I, like many Canadians, belong to neither.”

(in St. John's)

Opinions

Said the United Automobile Workers in Toronto: "A serious attempt at dealing with the issue of "national unity and Quebec begins with the recognition that Canada was founded on the basis of full equality between its French-speaking and English-speaking people." Said an Albertan: "There is no such thing as two founding races. We are multinational."

Such polarization was evident everywhere at the Task Force hearings and in the correspondence received. Although a great majority accepted the fact of an English-French duality, the Commissioners found no consensus either about the meaning or the consequences of recognizing the "principle of duality"; nor was there agreement on the concept of "two founding peoples" as a possible basis for its justification. From history, law and the observation of facts, came colliding opinions.

A deal is a deal

Both in Quebec and elsewhere, French-speaking participants argued that Confederation was a form of partnership between the two principal communities. "The French Canadians," said a member of Parliament from Quebec, "have always had a profound conviction" that Confederation was "an alliance, a treaty." It is "a pact between the two founding nationalities," another speaker said in Quebec City. The dualistic view of Canada was supported by a number of English-speaking Canadians in all regions and by a few representatives of major ethnic groups. From Vancouver: "When Canada was formed. . . the two founding peoples agreed to accept each other's rights, dignities and symbols." From Halifax: "A deal was made, in 1867, and should be honoured." From Winnipeg: "English-French dualism is one part of the complex Canadian reality." Again from Winnipeg: "It is clear that there were two founding races." From Charlottetown: "Let us face it, there are two nations here." From Toronto: "We have in our country two historically evolved communities."

More than two pillars

Many English speakers dismissed the concept of the founding peoples as a "myth," a "cliché." They saw it as "a heritage of central Canadian history," as a "ghost" that lingers to haunt us from the colonial days of Upper and Lower Canada. One Winnipegger was adamant: "Canada is not a partnership of two founding nations. This cliché has been fostered on the people of Canada by the federal government and repeated time and time again in order to make it a fact. Canada is one nation and one alone." Many participants objected to the idea that French-English "equality," as stated, for example, in the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism, should be a governing principle of Canadian life. "Accept it," said a letter from Ottawa, "and Mr. Trudeau and the French fact will take over completely without firing a shot."

Even, said some speakers, especially in the west, if such concepts do have some historical validity, they do not apply to the whole of Canada in the first place and, more significantly, they have been made obsolete by the multi-ethnic Canada that has since emerged. A Vancouverite refused to build "a new house" on only "two pillars" and a resident of Scarborough had become "a separatist" because he could not accept the theory of the "two founding peoples." If English-Canadian ambition to "assimilate" the French was seen by an Ottawan as "neither a noble vision nor a realistic one," a Winnipegger was only too willing to accept French Canadians if they "dropped the hyphen" and taught their children "the language of this country, which happens to be English." If a Torontonion thought it was time to make French Canadians "welcome as partners in Canada," others believed that such an idea would be a violation of the rule of the majority ("of the Bill of Rights," as one put it).

Without necessarily denying duality, some native leaders observed with displeasure that the concept of two founding peoples ignores their peoples. They too "claim the right to be considered as one of the founding nations of Canada." "The Indians," said an Ottawan, "were the first people to settle in Canada. If history is to offer a solution to [the Canadian] problem, then the native people of our land should have the biggest voice."

“We repeat it: this country can survive only if its two founding peoples are recognized in law and in fact.”

(L'Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française, in
Winnipeg)

“All this talk about having equality of French in the other provinces is out of place. The French are no more entitled to have special treatment in the other provinces than the million Germans, or the two-thirds of a million Ukrainians, or the quarter of a million Scandinavians, or the 100,000 Chinese, all of whom have contributed by their labour and their perseverance and their pioneering in the prairies and in this province and in other provinces. All those people are entitled to the cherishing of their culture.”

(in Vancouver)

“The prevailing notion in certain groups that the founding races must enjoy a special constitution of privileges is outdated. Embodied in any future political arrangement, they will be the source of political discord.”

(in Toronto)

“We want to live in French in our own country, in all the activities of society and not only at home. We are not a mere ethnic group: we are a founding people.”

(La Fédération des dames d'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, in
Moncton)

“In considering the Canadian constitution and its possible re-writing and re-negotiating, the most important social circumstance which must be taken into account is the fact of the pluralism of peoples within the country.”

(from Winnipeg)

“Now, let us put together a new constitution that will recognize both languages, and the two founding races only. Let the other racial groups join one or the other of the founding races; these two founding races must be retained; that is, they must have priority in all of the territory.”

(in Montreal)

“We have seventy-three nationalities, not two founding peoples. It violates the Bill of Rights.”

(from Red Lake, Alberta)

“Not only do we want to preserve all this, but we are determined to continue to develop these resources because by doing so we are ensuring the development of our province, of Quebec. Don't be mistaken — we are French-speaking Canadians and we are proud to be one of the two founding peoples of our country, Canada. To be sure, Mr. President, during these 110 years of Confederation, we have had growing pains but is that any reason to throw the baby out with the bath water?”

(in Quebec City)

“Canada is not a partnership of two founding nations. This cliché has been fostered by the federal government and repeated time and time again to the people of Canada in order to make it a fact. Canada is one nation and one alone.”

(from Winnipeg)

Just another minority

It was not easy for everyone who spoke in English at the Task Force hearings to understand the meaning of the term, "two founding peoples," because so many of them were not of British origin or did not consider themselves members of any founding people. They usually emphasized the heterogeneous, non-dualistic nature of English Canada. Snapped a Newfoundlander: "I, like many other Canadians, don't belong to either part of the duality." And the majority of those who spoke in French at the Montreal hearings identified themselves not as Canadians, but as Québécois.

Some Acadians agreed that the English and the French, the Inuit and the Indians were all founding peoples, but so were they. A citizen in Moncton stated that Acadians should "be respected as a nation." Like other spokesmen for French-speaking communities outside Quebec, Acadians resented being treated as "just another minority."

To many representatives of ethnic groups, the very expression "two founding peoples" appeared to downgrade the contribution they have made to Canada. They strongly asserted their right not to "assimilate" while "integrating" with one or the other, or both, of the two major language groups. "A long time ago," commented a Torontonian, "we had two so-called founding nations. When I look around, I see a lot more than two. . . . Please consider the evolutionary nature of society," he asked the Commissioners.

Duality of what?

But in the view of other speakers, duality was in fact so deeply rooted, so respected in Canada, that the two main cultural or linguistic groups had kept their identities to a remarkable degree. Wrote a citizen from Ottawa, "The most distinctive feature of Canadian society is precisely that it is the joining together of French and English, and that, as a result of this essential duality, we have accepted diversity — at first as a necessary evil, perhaps, but more recently as a key element in our national identity." Representatives for the Metro-Quebec Language Rights Committee came before the Task Force "as a living example of how French and English Canadians can live together in harmony." The Ontario Federation of Labour asserted: "The French in Quebec should be made to feel that they are not second-class citizens in Canada, but truly one of the two founding peoples."

To the French communities outside Quebec, the high rate of their assimilation was due mainly, in their view, to lack of support from the communities and from governments, which were making a travesty of duality. In Quebec itself, French-speaking Montrealers denounced the overpowering presence of the English language in Canada's largest city. And one of them pictured English-speaking Canadians as "laughing at the whole concept of duality."

"Duality of what?" asked many participants. The concept itself, even among those sympathetic to it, emerged in a rainbow of descriptions — two "linguistic communities," "two cultures," "two societies," "two nations," "two Canadas." Instead of equality, some preferred terms such as a "partnership," "equal opportunity," or simply "respect of the other community."

Some francophones and some anglophones held that co-existence between the two communities had been made difficult by the scarcity of common symbols. One of the causes of antagonism could be found in federal institutions. Many francophones saw the Canadian government, Parliament and other agencies as tending to represent mainly anglophone Canada, ignoring their role as agents for integrating both communities into the larger Canadian society.

In the opinion of a Vancouverite, "Confederation was a compact between the Canadian English and the Canadian French, because neither group wanted to become Americans." To which a citizen in Regina added a warning: "The vast majority of Lower Canada's political and religious leaders in the 1860s concluded that Confederation best assured the survival of French-speaking Canadians. The alternative was eventual annexation by the United States, leading to complete assimilation. So it is today."

“A new confederation or association, whatever it will be called, will have to take into consideration the fact of the two founding peoples and grant each one of them the necessary means to its own integral development.”

(from Moncton)

“Let’s face it, there are two nations here.”

(in Charlottetown)

“I believe that Confederation was a compact between the English Canadians and the French Canadians because neither group wanted to become American. I believe that the French Canadians are a nationality in their own right. I believe that in certain parts of Canada the French Canadians have never been dealt with fairly by the English Canadian majority.”

(in Vancouver)

“It is obvious that the federal system, as we have known it up until now, does not, from my own emotional and psychological standpoint — and the facts will bear me out on this — provide for a dialogue where both linguistic groups have sufficient confidence in the fairness of the structure and the equality of representation.”

(in Quebec City)

“Quebec people couldn’t care less whether or not people in Vancouver have French on their cereal boxes or whether English-speaking people in Alberta can obtain a copy of the Anti-Inflation Board’s latest booklet in French. The important thing is whether people in Quebec could speak the language they prefer, a language and a culture they have fought to defend through wars and through the heavy pressures of gradual submersion in the tide of English media.”

(United Steelworkers of America in Toronto)

“What I do want is for my province to be the master of its own destiny. French Canadians want their culture to be respected; respect for their religion exists in practice. I want French Canadians to have the right to speak their language right across the country.”

(in Quebec City)

“I think we are fortunate that we have the opportunity to become a bilingual nation. Unfortunately, I think we often pay lip-service to this. With respect to language and culture and two founding nations — in any constitutional changes, perhaps the most important thing is to make certain that the dual founding culture concept is entrenched entirely in the new constitution. It is perhaps the keystone and foundation to creating a new kind of Canada and we can only be enriched by it all.”

(in Calgary)

“We may rightfully assume that the Fathers of Confederation had an ideal; not primarily an economic one. They wanted to, and did, join together two nations. . . . Are we going to falter when we are so close to the coming of what was uppermost in their minds — a great and prosperous country where two great nations lived, worked and benefited so much from the fruits of their labour.”

(in Toronto)

Proposals

The wide differences in understanding and acceptance of the concept of duality, especially when defined as "equality between the two founding races," inevitably led to diverse, ambiguous and conflicting suggestions to the Task Force.

Functional equality?

Among those who accepted the continuation of a single state, a few participants recommended the full logical application of the concept of duality: equality, a 50-50 rule in the composition of some, if not all, federal institutions. Most often mentioned were the Senate and the Supreme Court. For example, in Vancouver and in Montreal, some participants recommended that "50 per cent of the members of the new Senate be appointed by Quebec," that "half of the senators be French-speaking," that a "specialized branch of the Supreme Court be established, half francophone, half anglophone, to deal with conflicts between the two official languages," or that on constitutional matters, "the court should be composed of an equal number of judges appointed by Quebec and by the other regions." A Torontonian was less precise and recommended that the concept of "equality should be applied functionally to our institutions and social systems."

A majority of supporters of the concept of duality made proposals that would translate it in cultural or linguistic terms rather than in political or institutional terms. For example, a speaker from Ottawa thought that "accommodation of a second culture and language does not have to be reflected in a two-nation approach which gives a Quebecer a greater say in the governmental process than others have." An anglophone Quebecer developed the idea: "Cultural aspirations must be designated as a heritage and not be allowed to interfere with the normal functions of Canada as a country." Among those who endorsed the concept, it was widely accepted that French Canada, as a distinct community, had the right to preserve its cultural uniqueness within the federation. "If there is to be true unity in the country," a Torontonian said, "equal recognition will have to be given in a positive way to both the English and French cultural heritage."

A score of participants recommended that the principle of duality be embodied in a new constitution. For another Torontonian, "the equality of our two founding peoples with their own distinct language and culture [should be] guaranteed [in the constitution, along with equalization and protection of individual rights], forming the anchor of Canada's basic existence as a united country." An Italo-Canadian group in Montreal wanted a renewed constitution that would sanction a new "social contract" based on the "historical validity which exists in Canada: two founding groups with equal rights and duties." The Committee for a New Constitution stated that such a new constitution should receive the approval of the "two majorities."

A few English-Canadian participants took what they called a "realistic" attitude, stating that, in order to prevent the break-up of the country, the principle of duality should be honoured. But the consequences of doing so were usually left undefined. The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour maintained that "any constitutional discussion must come to grips with the French and English character of our country in a way that recognizes the equality of both cultures." The United Steelworkers in Toronto would even "support the objective of constructive discussions and negotiations between Quebec and the rest of Canada to determine the future relationship between the two founding peoples of our country."

A citizen in Regina offered his view on the spirit with which English-French relations should be conducted: "As the majority, English Canadians bear the responsibility of making an extra effort to accept persuasively and with deep conviction the fact that there does exist in Canada two culturally distinct and autonomous people and that the survival and growth of this country will depend on the degree of cooperation these people can attain."

Let's be realistic

Many francophones, and some anglophones, believing that the principle of duality could not be implemented so fully at the federal level, suggested that Quebec, where the French-speaking population is most concentrated, should be granted a special role in preserving the French culture

“Even the professional federalists do not believe that defeating the referendum will end things. The discontent in Quebec goes much deeper than that. What is going on in Canada is the never-ending attempt by the two ‘founding peoples’ of this country to live together in peace and harmony and to grow. This effort will always be with us, whether Quebec votes ‘Oui!’ or ‘Non!’ ”

(The Ontario Federation of Labour, in Toronto)

“A policy of unity would begin by respecting the rights of the Québécois to determine their own future democratically. It would mean entering negotiations with Quebec on the basis of equality between Canada’s two founding nations. And, particularly important, it would mean demonstrating to Quebec that union with Canada promises to fulfill not only the unique cultural goals of the Québécois but also the general ideas of economic security, equality, justice and self-worth.”

(United Automobile Workers, in Toronto)

“But a new pact can only be based on the recognition and acceptance by all Canadians of one fact: that in North America, there exists a people who speak French. This means not only recognizing the fact, but also being determined that its development is furthered within the English-speaking sea that is North America.”

(Quebec Cooperation Council, in Montreal)

“We fully recognize that when Canada was formed 110 years ago, the two founding peoples agreed to accept each other’s rights, dignities and symbols. We recognize and regret that these rights and dignities have sometimes been neglected or offended. We earnestly believe that our short history has been a valuable learning experience — of great achievements and many growing pains — with which we can together shape these changes to ensure a better future.”

(in Vancouver)

“The catch phrase seems to be ‘les deux races fondatrices.’ This thesis denies the equal right of all citizens to participate equally in the recontracting. For this reason, I am a separatist.”

(from Scarborough)

“Any constitutional reform must recognize, first and foremost, the fact that this country is composed of two linguistic and cultural communities which must be put on an equal footing.”

(in Montreal)

in that province. A letter from Toronto proposed the following: "If you want this country to stay together, then allow Quebec to run its local affairs."

For "realistic" reasons they considered even more valid, a small but not negligible number of anglophones said of the Québécois: "let them go!" (see Part III).

Many French-speaking Quebecers at the Montreal and Quebec hearings had come to the same conclusion, for different reasons — they were convinced that real equality would never be accepted by English Canada.

Other participants formally proposed the total rejection of the concept. For example, one speaker who said: "The French are no more entitled to have special treatment in the other provinces than the million Germans or the two-thirds of a million Ukrainians or the quarter of a million Scandinavians or the 100,000 Chinese . . . all these people are entitled to the cherishing of their cultures." Said another: "the social and cultural content of Canada is now pluralistic, which fact makes the English-French duality much too narrow a context for our discussions and debates."

Many participants who declared their objection to, or their uneasiness with, the concept of duality offered other definitions of Canada: "a country of minorities"; a "country of regions"; a "multi-cultural state"; a "multi-national state"; a "pluralistic society"; a "one-nation bilingual state."

Background

Language statistics

The claim that Canada has a "dualistic" character is based not only on history, law and demography but also on the fact that two main languages are spoken in the country.

In 1971, English was the "mother tongue" ("the language first learned and still understood" to quote Statistics Canada) of 60.1 per cent of Canadians (61.4 per cent in 1976) and was given by 67.0 per cent of them as "the language most often spoken in the home."

English is obviously in the stronger position, all the more so because it is also the language of Canada's neighbour, the United States, and the first language of business, science and technology in the world. Most public concern, therefore, focuses on French, which was the *only* language of 18.0 per cent of the Canadian population in 1971 and of 60.8 per cent (or 3.7 million persons), of the population of Quebec. In that province, 80.7 per cent (80.0 per cent in 1976) gave French as their mother tongue. The following table compares the relative use of English and French in Canada and Quebec:

Statistics on official language* by ethnic origin as a percentage of the population in Canada and in Quebec, 1971

Official language	English origin %	French origin %	Other ethnic groups %
Canada			
English only	42.0	2.3	22.8
French only	0.3	17.2	0.5
Both English and French	2.4	9.1	2.0
Neither English nor French	—	—	1.4
Quebec			
English only	6.1	0.5	3.9
French only	0.9	58.3	1.6
Both English and French	3.6	20.1	3.9
Neither English nor French	—	—	1.1

* Refers to the ability to carry on a conversation of some length on various topics in either of the official languages of Canada.

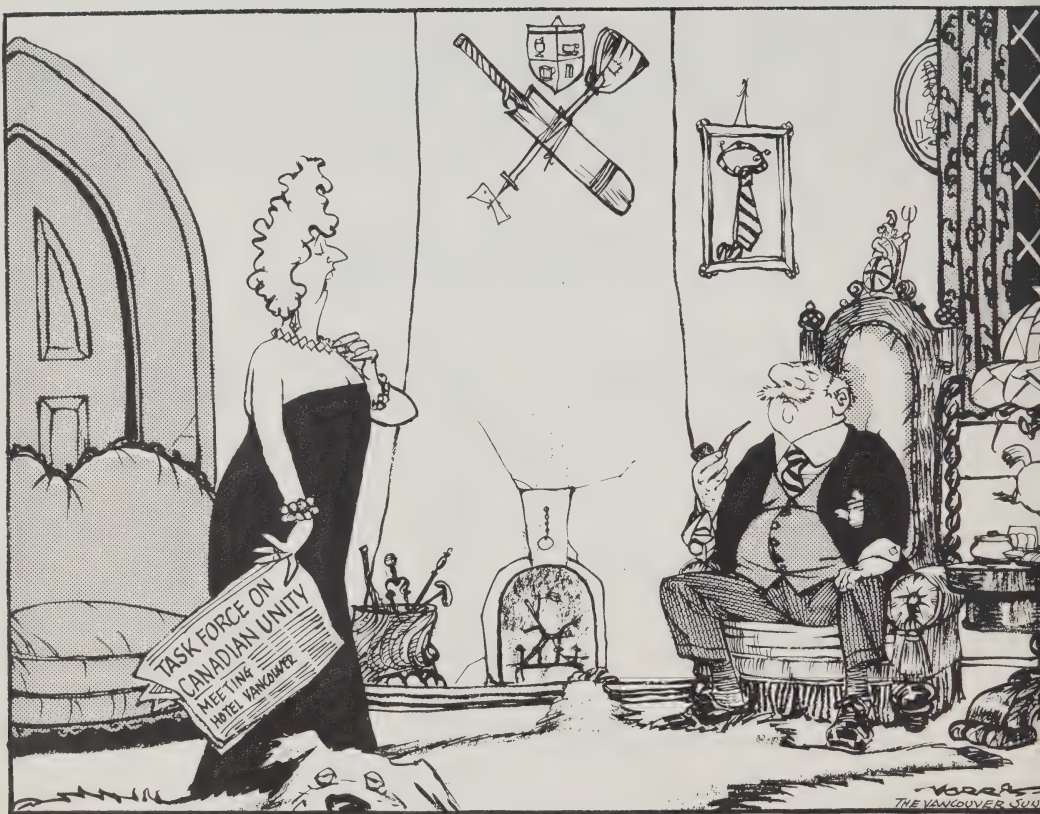
Source: 1971 census of Canada, catalogue 92-736, language by ethnic groups.

Recent language legislation at the federal level

In the last decade particularly, the central and provincial governments have adopted and implemented laws and regulations in an effort to provide services in French and English.

Section 2 of the federal Official Languages Act states that "English and French are the official languages of Canada, and possess and enjoy equal status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all the institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada."

The law does not say that all federal employees must be bilingual, nor does it require private



" . . . I think they'd appreciate it if you and I, Rodney, were to just pop in to say bonjour . . . "

citizens to become bilingual. Its objective is to allow citizens to deal with the central government in the official language of their choice, an aim which respects individual unilingualism.

"Institutional bilingualism," as it is called, requires that, as a question of principle in head offices, and elsewhere, if there is a "significant demand" for it, federal offices should have the capacity to serve its public in both official languages.

Most federal labelling legislation in Canada now reflects the central government's linguistic policy: as a general practice, imported and domestic consumer products should show mandatory label declarations in both English and French. The amount of bilingual labelling required is dependent upon the legislation in question. For example, non-food products governed by the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act (1975) must identify product and net quantity in both official languages. However, food commodities subject to the labelling requirements of the Food and Drugs Act (1976) must show additional information, such as ingredient lists, in a bilingual manner.

Legislation, passed by Parliament in the summer of 1978, amended the Criminal Code in an effort to give every Canadian the right to a trial in French or English. Province-by-province proclamation will permit each participating government to take the necessary steps to give effect to that legislation. In areas where small and scattered minority official language groups live, central courts may be established. Interpreters will remain available for persons who speak neither official language.

... at the provincial level

The New Brunswick Official Languages Act (1969) has the same intent as the federal legislation. Generally speaking, it guarantees access to the courts, to the public school systems and to other provincial government services in the official language of the citizen's choice. Municipal councils may use either language, or both.

In Quebec, it has been the policy of all governments since the sixties to promote the use of French. The most recent language law is "Bill 101," the Charter of the French Language (1977), which makes French the official language of the province.

The sections of the charter which restricted the use of English in legislation and in the courts have since been held invalid by the courts. The law's most controversial section concerns education. It states that all newcomers to Quebec, immigrants or migrants, who plan to make the province their home, must send their children to French schools. It does not prohibit of course English-speaking Quebecers from sending their children to English schools.

Some other provinces have passed regulations dealing with the provision of French in public services, the establishment of French schools, and the teaching of French as a second language. These regulations, however, are of a voluntary rather than an obligatory character. They allow a provincial minister or local board to approve a service in French where there is a sufficient number of people who want the service.

Questions

Is duality accepted by Canadians as it is expressed in the federal Official Languages Act and various provincial laws and regulations? (This section deals only with "institutional bilingualism," that is, the availability of government services in both English and French. "Personal bilingualism" is covered in Part II, under "Education.")

“Unless we can succeed in ensuring that the right of each and every citizen to deal with his government, which is the Canadian government, in his own language becomes a fact rather than a matter of privilege, all the structural changes we may bring about will be of no avail.”

(in Quebec City)

“The Canadian people should demand a yes or no referendum on the Official Languages Act.”

(in Calgary)

“This Task Force (Pepin-Robarts) should have been set up at the turn of the century. It is too late now to expect anything that can be applied to come out of the recommendations of the Task Force. After all, the Official Languages Act, of 1969, has turned out to be an outright fiasco as far as the English-speaking population is concerned and in spite of the millions that the federal government invested in the project.”

(in Montreal)

“Bilingualism is the chief source of the disunity in Canada today.”

(in Moncton)

“We accept the duality of our country. However, we do not applaud the token bilingualism presently in existence. If the country, federally, is to be bilingual, then the right of French-speaking people to be heard, federally, in their native language should be just that — a right — not a privilege.”

(Canadian Federation of University Women, in St. John's)

“The Official Languages Act is a quasi-military manoeuvre to achieve Quebec supremacy.”

(from Calgary)

“...bilingualism is being stuck down our throats... I am not against bilingualism, but I feel it is complete foolishness that \$10,000 was spent to try to educate me in French, along with hundreds of other people in this metro area.”

(in Halifax)

“In due course, Mr. Trudeau and the French fact will take over completely without firing a shot.”

(in Charlottetown)

“... I am tired of being called a redneck because I am proud of my British heritage. And I grew up wanting to learn the French language. Unfortunately, the government's determination to implement the recommendations of the B&B Commission has killed my desire... and has actually made me feel at times that I am living in a conquered country.”

(from Calgary)

“Negative reactions against the Official Languages Act were caused mainly by the lack of good communication between the people and the government and a good educational program to explain exactly what bilingualism would mean to the person on the street.”

(from Brandon, Man.)

Opinions

There was fairly wide acceptance, at the Task Force hearings and in letters, of *the principle* that federal public services should be provided in both English and French. In the words of a Torontonians: "The Official Languages Act must be enforced. . . . People have the right to be heard in one of the official languages regardless of what part of the country they might be in." In the opinion of the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, this principle should apply at all three levels of government. "Whenever numbers warrant" was, however, a frequent qualification of that principle.

Ramming. . . down our throats

But most speakers were critical, often for diametrically opposed reasons, of the means employed to achieve that objective, and particularly those used to make the federal public service bilingual. Those means were described as "unfair," "expensive," "inefficient." The Ontario Federation of Labour argued that "coast to coast bilingualism is an expensive and ridiculous program." The Nova Scotia Teachers' Union said it wasn't working. Acting Premier Warner Jorgenson of Manitoba called it "abrasive" and "rigid." Like many others, all of these participants saw educational alternatives ("an effective and active form of personal bilingualism"), as a better course to be pursued than federal policies and programs aimed at achieving "institutional bilingualism." The best solution, they believed, lay in teaching both official languages to children from kindergarten onward.

English-speaking opponents of the Official Languages Act put forward many other arguments: institutional bilingualism is not mentioned in the BNA Act, which establishes it only in the legislatures and courts of Canada and Quebec; it is impossible to protect languages by laws; two languages cannot co-exist; other languages spoken in Canada have as much usefulness as English and French; minority languages should be spoken at home only; institutional bilingualism "discriminates" in favour of French Canadians because they *have* to know English to succeed, etc.

Other grievances were expressed as well. In time, an Albertan feared, "we will have a French Canadian bureaucracy running an essentially English-speaking country." To a Torontonians, "the many billions of dollars being spent on the French language must instead be spent on things we need." In Halifax, a civil servant said it was a "waste" to train him and many others in French. There were charges that unilingual officials were being "forced out of jobs or denied promotions to the advantage of bilingual French Canadians."

Indeed, a number of speakers believed that a combination of the Official Languages Act and "French power" in the cabinet was "ramming French down our throats." From Winnipeg came the accusation that Ottawa "absolutely refuses to admit" the merits of the western feeling that there were more important issues facing the country than having us "all speak" French. "Ottawa and Quebec have only one reaction — we are wrong, we are bats, selfish, mean, unloving, and must be bullied, lectured and frightened into changing."

To some participants, the problem was that the Official Languages Act had been ineptly explained by the government, and a few implied that much of the opposition to it was misdirected. An Ottawa felt the basis of opposition went deeper than that, to an "irrational hostility and even a fear" of French and those who speak it.

A price to pay

On the other hand, a number of English-speaking Canadians strongly supported the act. A letter from Ottawa said bilingualism had made "remarkable" progress in the public service. Wryly, the correspondent added: "No longer is it considered mildly perverse for a French Canadian ambassador to report to Ottawa in his own language, and it is even possible for him to do so in cypher telegrams." In Calgary, the Local Council of Women regretted that Canada failed to measure up to Switzerland: "it reflects poorly on us that we have difficulty in seeing the advantages of two languages and two cultures." From a Vancouverite: to make all Canadians feel

“There are criticisms that can be made of the federal government's language policies, but they have helped transform our vision of what Canada can become. They have changed the way things are done in the federal public service to a remarkable extent. . . . Looking back to the days when bilingual government cheques were seen as a constructive step for national unity, we have come a long way, bébé!”

(from Ottawa)

“...I, as an English-speaking Quebecer who is now living here in Toronto, do not want to lose the French-speaking language. I shall try to preserve it because I realize, having come here, how I appreciate Quebec.”

(in Toronto)

“Canada is a second Switzerland. Speak the language of the majority of the province. . . we have to ask the minority in Quebec to help us to keep Canada united. . . accept Bill 101.”

(in Toronto)

“Now that I have learned to speak French and that I have made some real friends among the francophones, I have become increasingly aware of the fact that every French-speaking Canadian, without exception has, either consciously or unconsciously, suffered untold abuse on the linguistic level, not only in terms of more or less obvious wrongs but especially [in terms of] lack of understanding and condescension.”

(in Toronto)

“Unfortunately, I do not speak both languages. When I go to Toronto, for example — and I've had the opportunity to travel all over Canada — even though I pay federal taxes which are paying for the public services I receive, I still can't get service in my own language. That is a real disappointment to me.”

(in Quebec City)

“Quebec's Bill 101 is, at best, bureaucratic terrorism, at worst, rabid chauvinism. Its aim is to destroy a visible, vibrant and dynamic anglophone community.”

(in Montreal)

“There are guaranteed rights for French minorities and others all over Canada but nowhere do I hear of English minority rights.”

(from St. Lambert, Que.)

“Some find fault with Bill 101. If the francophones outside Quebec had half of what the anglophones of Quebec have, they would be happy.”

(in Montreal)

“Provincial governments don't seem to understand that they can't escape their responsibilities by casting blame on the federal government. In matters of public service and socio-cultural policy, the provinces have an ever greater role and their indifference to our interests can't go on.”

(The Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, in Toronto)

at home in either language "can be one of our strongest bonds." Echoed a Winnipegger: "Let us develop a constitution that can preserve the French language, not only for Quebecers, but for Canada." In Toronto, someone suggested that tax incentives should be given to those who master a second official language. Someone else argued that "time is running out and no smokescreen should be put in the way" of recognizing French rights across Canada.

Other English-speaking Canadians saw the act as crucial to the survival of the French community: some regretted that linguistic equality had not been respected and saw institutional bilingualism as providing an example to the world; others deplored the fact that their own education had not allowed them to become or remain bilingual. In Moncton, a citizen said: "My precious birthright, the French language, is lost to me forever. It is a big price to pay for leaving Quebec, as my forbears did."

French-speaking Quebecers supported both the federal and the provincial language legislation, but had some objections to both. They claimed that the federal act could not deal adequately with the real cultural problems of Quebec. Many resented the fact that they still had to work in English. A professor in Montreal said that the Québécois could not leave the tools of their cultural survival to a Parliament dominated by a majority which used another language. Provincial legislation was needed, said another, because "we are being assimilated." If anything, said yet another, Bill 101 was too mild.

Some representatives of the English-speaking community in Quebec stated that relations had been improving for some time between French and English-speaking citizens in the province. However, Bill 101 was now inhibiting progress by restricting the use of English in education, provincial services and business. Many criticized Ottawa for not caring about English language rights in Quebec. They urged the central government to challenge the constitutionality of Bill 101 in the courts.

To these arguments, French-speaking Quebecers, and other francophones elsewhere, replied that English-speaking Quebecers were overreacting, that they still had far superior public school facilities and public and private services in English compared to what was available in French in the other provinces to French-speaking Canadians. If, said one, the latter had half the rights of the former "they would be happy." Some anglophones acknowledged the truth of their argument.

Francophones outside Quebec argued that institutional bilingualism, both federal and provincial, was being implemented too slowly. In reaction to the Ontario government's gradualist policy of introducing French into provincial services, most francophones and some anglophones from that province thought that something more forward-looking and dramatic had to be done. On his part, Premier Davis contended that "what Ontario has done and is doing" was a significant indication of "our commitment to providing fairly, adequately and realistically for minority language requirements."

Musts and mayes

Some franco-Ontarians wanted more: "We don't," said one, "want merely to be served in our language; we want to be able to live all aspects of our lives in it." According to the North Bay's Comité d'action, "all levels of government must offer services in both official languages." Toronto's Club Richelieu believed nothing less would stem assimilation. From Toronto, too, came a letter stating that franco-Ontarians are "totally ignored," and often told to "speak white." Unless, said another, the English accept "the challenge of two languages" he saw neither the necessity nor the possibility of Canadian survival.

Like the franco-Ontarians, francophone Manitobans wanted more than token minimum services, though they noted with satisfaction that section 23 of the Manitoba Act on French language rights, wiped out by a provincial statute in 1890, had been "reactivated" by a recent court decision declaring the provincial statute unconstitutional. "That 1890 act," a Montrealer said, "was what had started Canada towards a slow death."

In New Brunswick, the Acadian community deplored the inadequate wording of the provincial

“The French-Canadian communities must develop a strong social, cultural and economic base. In order to do this, they need the help of the provincial and federal governments. This means that both the federal and provincial levels of government must make sure that the Official Languages Act is applied in real terms and that a bilingual civil service meets the needs of the French-speaking communities of the country.”

(The Société des Acadiens de l'Île du Prince-Edouard, in Charlottetown)

“That the young francophones outside Quebec be educated in French should not be a matter of privilege, but a right.”

(Jeunes Acadiens en marche, in Halifax)

“Even if some constitutional amendments were made to protect language rights in education, it would have no effect on the French-speaking minorities as long as the attitudes of the provinces remain the same.”

(Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Ecosse, in Halifax)

“The best way to unite Canada is to let everyone speak English.”

(in Whitehorse)

“... Bill 22 and Bill 101 were inevitable, due to the fact that French-Canadian rights have been infringed upon outside of Quebec consistently. ... Anglophones have spared no efforts to try to assimilate the francophones of Canada.”

(in Regina)

“The French-speaking minorities of this country have been treated far more liberally than the English-speaking minority in Quebec by Bill 101.”

(from Rumsay, Alberta)

“They want only French in Quebec, a very good idea, and we want no French here. They don't want us, we don't want them.”

(from Vancouver)

“Without any real knowledge of the Quebec situation or of what the bilingualism program was about, I reacted by feeling threatened in my own country. I blustered, like others around me, and made statements without thought or any sound basis of fact. I became incensed with the thought of being put in the position of learning to speak French while living in a community where English only was spoken.”

(from Brandon)

“... We are prepared to see, across this country, the right of parents to have their children educated in the official language of their choice guaranteed in that section of our constitution concerning the provincial responsibility for education.”

(Premier Davis, in Toronto)

“... Every child in Canada should be taught English and French.”

(in Vancouver)

Official Languages Act. It was "full of mays" and, further, had taken years to be entirely proclaimed after it had become law. Acadians from other Atlantic provinces felt they had even more reason to object, since they had no official languages acts at all.

In the west, many English speakers saw French as irrelevant and judged federal services in that language to be a "costly imposition." "What we need," in the opinion of a Vancouverite, "is to persuade Quebecers that they should be grateful that they were given the privilege of [keeping] their language . . . in 1774." Many westerners agreed that the public service in Ottawa should be bilingual, but some worried that this would hamper the careers of westerners who work for the central government.

“It seems difficult for other ethnic groups to realize that having French as an extra language is an asset.”

(in Winnipeg)

“...within a 50 mile radius of Toronto... there are over 600,000 Canadians of Italian descent. What about their minority rights and their languages?”

(in Toronto)

“I can find nothing wrong with René Lévesque saying that in Quebec French is a fact and those who are not willing to accept it have the choice of leaving. Similarly, as a British Columbian, English is a fact and those who don't like it have a choice of leaving.”

(in Vancouver)

“Make Canada a truly bilingual country... A comprehensive teacher exchange program between Quebec and the rest of Canada is imperative.”

(in Regina)

“It may well be that I will have to move elsewhere, but where? In Ontario, I am called a frog or French pea soup and in Quebec, they think of me as the English lady from Ontario. Why can't I have the right to feel at home here in Ontario? Why should it always continue to be a privilege?”

(from Windsor, Ontario)

“...it would be more advantageous to accept defeat of the broadest concepts of the bilingualism policy... We are too big, our people too scattered... We should... substitute for it alternatives... have governments adopt or renew efforts to create a spirit of tolerance and understanding... assure increasing emphasis on the teaching of the second language in all provinces.”

(Nova Scotia Teachers Union, in Halifax)

“Long ago French Canada accepted a future under the British Crown because that Crown guaranteed its freedom to preserve its language. That guarantee must be renewed today, not by the Crown, but by English-speaking Canada.”

(in Charlottetown)

Proposals

One recommendation stood out: that the language rights of both French and English should be recognized. Some wanted them guaranteed by the constitution. The rights most people had in mind covered access to education, to broadcasting, to the courts, in both languages, sometimes unqualified, sometimes qualified by the yardstick "whenever numbers warrant." Bilingual health services were not far behind.

Institutional or personal?

Again and again, the Task Force was told that the key to a language policy lay in educating the young in both languages. "It is," said a letter from a French Canadian in Ontario, "among the young that we can create a Canadian pride," by making them bilingual. An English-speaking citizen in Toronto believed that "bilingualism is desirable but few families can get a bilingual education for their children." In Toronto, too, a college head thought that both levels of government "have neglected to provide the specific education" that would make bilingualism work.

Repeatedly, English speakers urged a larger federal role in language education (such as more financial aid to school language training and a program of "national education"), and in the protection of minorities.

Some urged the Council of provincial Ministers of Education to take on greater responsibility in coordinating and expanding education services and programs.

Many spokesmen for ethno-cultural groups endorsed the practice of institutional bilingualism, especially if it were coupled with a law implementing multiculturalism. Other languages should be taught too, they insisted, even, some said, as main languages of instruction in areas where non-English, non-French minorities live in sufficient numbers.

Quite a few English-speaking participants in Task Force hearings were not undisposed to making Quebec a French-only province, the rest of Canada English-only, if it would "keep peace." But none of these speakers came from Quebec. English-speaking Canadians from Quebec and elsewhere hoped Quebec's Bill 101 would be amended. The expression "freedom of choice" was often invoked.

It was suggested, fairly often, and not only by French Canadians, that other provinces follow the example of New Brunswick and pass official languages acts. The province most often mentioned in this context was Ontario. In the same spirit, a few speakers stressed the need to be "practical" and to concentrate on providing bilingual government services in the "bilingual belt," the area from Sudbury to Moncton. A letter from Moncton said the best solution to the problems in the public services was duplication: "Instead of a bilingual civil service, two unilingual, autonomous civil services, one based in Hull, the other in Ottawa."

All things are possible

Many speakers pointed out that private initiatives were needed. They called for travel, student and teacher exchange programs, for promotion of French in business, all designed to encourage Canadians to see bilingualism, personal and institutional, as an asset rather than a liability. "Within the framework of two official languages, all things are possible," said a Torontonian, "if the will is there to see the limitless range" of possibilities.

To many, however, nothing short of a drastic "change in attitude" could bring about a truly bilingual country. Of all the statements made to the Commissioners about language, this sentiment was probably voiced most frequently.

Background

Population

The statistics used by central government agencies indicate that there are currently some 289,000 status Indians, 22,000 Inuit and 750,000 Métis and non-status Indians in Canada. This represents about 5 per cent of the Canadian population.

Definitions

Since Confederation, politically and administratively, the Indians and the Inuit generally have been under federal jurisdiction, the Métis, generally under provincial jurisdiction.

Indians are defined as persons registered or entitled to be registered under the federal Indian Act. Early legislation placed in that category not only all persons of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular "band," but all persons residing among such Indians whose mother or father was reputed to belong to that band. Also deemed to be Indian was a woman married to a man fitting into one of those two categories.

The 1876 Indian Act stipulated that any Indian who received a university degree or became a member of the clergy was automatically enfranchised, and therefore ceased to be a status Indian. It also stated that an Indian could become enfranchised with the consent of his band and a certificate from a "competent person" witnessing that he had demonstrated qualities sufficient to justify it!

A non-status Indian is a person of Indian ancestry who has become enfranchised, or is a descendant of an enfranchised person or who, while identifying himself as an Indian, is not entitled to be registered under the Indian Act. Many individuals become alternately status and non-status as they marry, or their parents marry, status or non-status Indians. The kinship pattern of the majority of non-status Indians includes status Indians.

In the terminology of the nineteenth century, a Métis was a person of mixed French-Indian ancestry, while the offspring of British and Indian parents were called half-breeds. Of late, the term "Métis" tends to be used to refer to any person of mixed ancestry who is not registered as an Indian under the act.

At the same time as Indian legislation was being consolidated, the central government made provision for the Métis and half-breeds. The Manitoba Act of 1870 authorized the setting aside of land for them in that province. The same was done later in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Métis and non-status Indians are usually considered together for administrative purposes, though the two terms are far from synonymous.

The Inuit are Canadians of native ancestry who speak the Inuktitut language. Given that contact with them was more limited, as they live in the far north, the Inuit did not sign treaties with Canada. However, negotiations are now taking place between the central government and the Inuit with a view to extinguishing aboriginal titles.

Policies

What is best for native communities in a predominantly white society has been a matter of controversy for many years. In general, the policy of all Canadian governments in the past has been to encourage their assimilation.

Recently, these policies have been undergoing reassessment in the light of the greater respect for individual and collective rights which now exists in Canada. Governments now tend to encourage native communities to preserve their cultures.

With the support of the central government, native organizations have been created. The most important are the National Indian Brotherhood, representing the status Indians; the Native Council



of Canada, representing the Métis and non-status Indians; and Tapirisat of Canada, representing the Inuit. These national associations have provincial and local chapters. In addition, there are numerous district organizations.

Questions

How do Canadians of native origin see their past, their present and their future? What do they think of the current unity debate? What are their views on Quebec? What political regime do they have in mind for themselves?

“The history of the Europeans in this country is a horrible story — it is a story of greed: it is a story of the quest for power. It is a story of exploitation; it is a story of germ warfare. It is a story of broken treaties from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is a story of a backlog of over 300 years of broken promises.”

(Micmac Association of Cultural Studies, in Halifax)

“Our languages have no place in the parliaments or in the courts or in schools today. Our culture has become a tourist aid to add colour to parades and festivals . . .”

(The Wesley Band, in Calgary)

“Certainly the most important priority in most Indian communities is not national unity . . . The basic day-to-day issues are housing, high unemployment, which is as high as 90 per cent in many Indian communities . . . There is a sense of helplessness and hopelessness of a people who are on the bottom rung of decision-making powers.”

(Union of New Brunswick Indians, in Moncton)

“The Indians are in concentration camps! I know all about it, I've worked with Indians — pardon the expression, but they practically have to ask permission to go to the john.”

(in Montreal)

“We were guaranteed that these [treaty] promises would last 'as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow and the grass grows' . . . And today, the statistics with regard to poverty, housing, disease, education, unemployment, life-expectancy, violent deaths, incarceration, alcohol abuse, infant mortality and a number of other areas, all point to the inability or the unwillingness of the Canadian government to fulfill its part of the bargain.”

(Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, in Regina)

“We haven't even been recognized for what we as native peoples contributed, but only as savages running around with loincloths.”

(from Fort Simpson, NWT)

“We are the Métis, the half-breeds, and we are the Indians who are not recognized as such by the Indian Act of Canada. Our people are not beneficiaries of the provisions of the Indian Act — we do not have reserves, nor do we have a massive government department with a budget in the hundreds of millions of dollars to look after our interests.”

(Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association, in Toronto)

“One of the greatest Canadian historical myths has been perpetuated during the current debate on national unity. I am speaking in particular of the myth suggesting that the French and English are the founding peoples of Canada. This statement is patently false. It is historically inaccurate and an insult to the Indian people of Canada.”

(National Indian Brotherhood, in Ottawa)

“Many of the people who immigrated to this country, within a generation or two discarded the language and cultural values of their homeland. The native people of Canada have no other homeland and have no desire to discard the values and cultures of their forefathers.”

(Métis Association of Alberta, in Edmonton)

Opinions

"Prejudice," "stereotyping," "bigotry," "tokenism" and "band-aid remedies" are deep-rooted problems caused by the "colonizers" — these are the rewards Canada's native peoples received for welcoming the "immigrants" from Europe in a spirit of "accommodation" and "brotherhood," spokesmen for native peoples' organizations told the Task Force.

Cultural "destruction" began, said the Indian Homemakers Association of British Columbia, as "thinly disguised missionary zeal" to elevate the "primitive societies" to a "civilized state." With "slickly worded treaties" that the natives did not fully understand, "skilled federal real estate agents" purchased "half a continent" for a "handful of rights and guarantees."

Here first

"It is a known fact that we were here long before 1492," said a man in Yellowknife. "Why," he asked, "does Canadian history start with the arrival of the first Europeans?" Calling the English and French the "two founding peoples" is a "gross insult" to native peoples, who were here long before the Europeans and who showed willingness to share this land with the newcomers.

"Share it, but don't give it away forever," many said. Several Indian representatives pointed out that treaties gave Europeans the right to establish settlements, but did not hand over ownership of the land. "It is similar to renting a house," stated the Wesley Band in Calgary, "the tenant cannot take it away."

Today's reality is a case of the landlord without power; government legislation has fragmented native peoples and has been the cause of massive "acculturation" and "cultural genocide." "Experience has shown us one thing," noted the Native Canadians Centre in Toronto: Canadian society "was and still is 'hypocritical.'" "We are called militants when we fight for our rights, and pagans when we worship at our own churches," as another group put it. According to the Native Council of Canada, the "fundamental issue at stake" is the "unwillingness, inability or incapability" of the central government "to deal with the aboriginal rights issue." Many representatives stressed that they were not seeking "handouts" but a "fair return" for their "legitimate rights and entitlements" which is "long overdue."

Many native speakers painted vivid pictures of their condition at the "bottom" of Canadian society: the highest unemployment rate of any group in the country; poor housing, alcohol abuse, lack of self respect and the psychological stranglehold of despair not easily broken from generation to generation.

The largest percentage of the Indian Affairs budget does not go to Indian communities, charged the Union of New Brunswick Indians. It said that the budget primarily supports a "glorified welfare system" for "white civil servants" who are determining "in isolation" what is good for the Indians. Some groups accused the central government bureaucracy of "undermining" the social structures of native peoples. Enfranchisement has been consistently encouraged, many observed, which greatly contributes to the process of assimilation.

Forgotten people

"Of all the groups in Canada," the Métis and non-status Indians have "clearly suffered the most" from an "inflexible federalism," said representatives from these groups. They complained that the Indian Act defines an Indian as "someone having an Indian father"; thus, "the federal government recognizes the status of these Indians, while all other native peoples appear to be ignored." "We are suffering all forms of 'persecution': racial, economic, cultural, linguistic — you name it and our people have fallen prey to it. . . . It is the Canadian shame," said the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association.

Métis representatives recalled for the Task Force that they negotiated their entry into Confederation through the Riel government and the Manitoba Act. They believed they have strong evidence that land set aside for them at the time was largely given to others, or was grabbed by

“Members of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, my brothers and everybody else, welcome to Canada. I say this not so much to be facetious . . . but rather to reflect what our ancestors said when your ancestors came to the shores of North America.”

(Chief Grand Council, in Toronto)

“My country is one where two conquerers, without so much as a by-your-leave to the original inhabitants, call themselves the two founding peoples!”

(in Ottawa)

“The day when the English and the French can pretend that they alone are the founding nations is past. There can be no justice and there can be no true unity in Canada until this fact is recognized and until our rights are guaranteed along with those of the other two so-called ‘founding races.’”

(Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians, Saskatchewan, in Regina)

“This Task Force says it will work closely with the Canadian people. How much closer can you work with Canadians than with the original landlords of Canada?”

(Micmac Association of Cultural Studies, in Halifax)

“It’s crucial that the land claims process be recognized as the key step when considering constitutional development in the Yukon itself and in Canada as a whole. The land claims [process] is, in one of its aspects, a massive exercise in consciousness-raising.”

(in Whitehorse)

“The fundamental issue at stake for the Métis Nation, and [the reason for] our inclusion in the unity debate is the unwillingness, inability or incapability of the federal government to deal with the aboriginal rights issue. Unless this critical situation is resolved, we cannot objectively deal with two ‘founding’ cultures while rejecting the first citizens of this country.”

(Native Council of Canada, in Ottawa)

“I can’t see any provincial status being accorded to the Yukon Territory without first resolving the land claims, because there are certain difficulties under provincial jurisdiction and the Territorial Government is not cooperating very well with the Indians. I feel if the land claims could be settled first and a man’s right given to him, then he could take part in active government.”

(in the Yukon)

“We once shared Canada with you. Sometimes we wonder whether we might not have been a little too liberal with our immigration policies, because we now find ourselves on the outside, knocking on the door.”

(Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association, in Toronto)

“Through a negotiated settlement of our outstanding claims, we are determined to become full-fledged citizens with the degree of political self-determination necessary to take responsibility once again for running our own affairs.”

(The Inuit Tapirasat of Canada, in Ottawa)

immigrants who came west. In the 1880s, they said, they were playing a leadership role as intermediaries between white people and Indians. Now, they see themselves as the "forgotten people."

“If the country is not prepared to recognize that aboriginal rights exist, that the Canadian native peoples have had, and continue to have, aboriginal rights, then we are going to increase dissension, ill will, and possibly even [cause] revolution within the country.”

(The New Brunswick Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians, in Moncton)

“We ask that there be no negotiations for a new constitution unless our leaders are involved in the negotiations. We want our national rights enshrined in such a new constitution. We are tired of being an unrecognized, manipulated, despised, poverty-stricken people in our own land. . . . The agony of our people cries out for justice now.”

(Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, in Regina)

“On re-writing the constitution: in Canada's history there should have been provinces for the native and Métis peoples, but the opportunity was missed. We are given a second chance to try again.”

(in Winnipeg)

“The social, economic and political values of the native peoples, both status and non-status, must be legislated and integrated into the future status of the Yukon, whether it be provincial or remain as a territory for some time to come.”

(in Whitehorse)

“The rights of the Indians and the Inuit should be entrenched in the constitution. We took their land from them. (Who did they take it away from?) They're probably immigrants themselves, they've just been here longer. . . . In fact, broadly speaking, we are all immigrants.”

(from Quebec City)

“Indian people all across Canada are intent upon establishing and exercising their rights as Canada's first citizens We have very much in common with French Canadians who also have a special status guaranteed by law, and then subsequently are ignored.”

(Yukon Native Brotherhood, in Whitehorse)

“Let's give serious thought to a new northern province, especially for the Indians and the Eskimos. It's only right and it's important.”

(in Toronto)

“If Canadian society cannot recognize the legislated rights of its own native peoples, then it should not talk about national unity, about two founding nations.”

(Native Canadian Centre of Toronto; in Toronto)

“We suggest to you that separation in Canada is not exclusively a matter with Quebec. For years, dating back to 1969, the year of the White Paper, the American Indian Movement has been advocating and designing programs for Indian spirituality — spirituality to *separate* Indians from corruption, spirituality to ensure that Indians are able to live out their lives with integrity, honesty, and dignity.”

(The American Indian Movement, Southern Alberta chapter, in Calgary)

Proposals

Equal partnership

Indians, Métis and Inuit who appeared before the Task Force often made impassioned pleas for unity based on brotherly concern for each other and a reverence for the land. "This land is sacred to native people," said one of them, "not to hoard greedily for ourselves, but to share, to replenish for future generations so that all might benefit from it."

Diverse as the groups were, four main points came through all the presentations of native peoples: (1) that they are entitled to "compensation" for the "historic disregard" of their treaty rights and for the numerous "hardships" that have been inflicted upon them; (2) that they should be asked to contribute to the national decision-making process and to the daily conduct of the nation's business — left out of the discussions that eventually led to Confederation, they should not be "over-looked" again; (3) that they should be included in the constitution as "equal partners" with the French and the English; (4) that their fellow citizens should recognize their desire for "self-determination," and their right to live according to their own beliefs and traditions.

The right of "self-determination," "self-development" or "special status" was invoked by most groups. The distinctiveness of native values can be respected only if they are allowed their own political institutions, "a degree of self-government," "true participation." Without that, "we will be destined to remain on the periphery of Canadian society," said the National Indian Brotherhood. "Land and money are elements of our land claims, but by no means the only ones," stated the Council for Yukon Indians. The essence of land claims, the Council said, is the achievement of social and cultural goals.

"We have very much in common with French Canadians who also had a special status guaranteed by law and then subsequently ignored," stated the Yukon Native Brotherhood. Other native groups expressed their "agreement" with francophone Quebecers who wish to "re-negotiate" their place in Confederation.

Native groups who appeared before the Task Force, however, all stressed that they wanted to live in a united Canada. Secession, theirs or Quebec's, would only hurt them, they said. "Whatever constitutional alterations are made, my people insist that their relationship with the Government of Canada remain unchanged," stated the Wesley Band in Calgary. "We are opposed to the division of Canada by Quebec," added Les Hurons de Lorette.

There was general agreement among other Canadians appearing before the Task Force that "something special" should be done for native peoples to accommodate their land claims, to give them the opportunity to develop some form of self-government. "In Saskatchewan, we are very aware that any restructuring of Confederation must take account of our native peoples and of their special interest," declared Premier Blakeney of Saskatchewan. The Committee for a New Constitution wanted Canada to commit itself to "a process of negotiation with native peoples which is fair and mutually agreeable."

To speak for their special needs and priorities at the national level, some native groups asked for "ethnic franchise," that is, a number of seats in the House of Commons and the Senate reserved for native representatives.

Explain how this happened

"We are told that we are Canadian citizens," commented the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. "But nobody has been able to explain how this happened." "We have never signed treaties or been conquered; we have never, in war or otherwise, surrendered our rights." An Inuit group asked for "recognition" of their right to survive as a "unique group within the Canadian mosaic." Other groups, such as one from Quebec, argued that northern development must not proceed at their "expense." A "fair share" of development benefits "must accrue" to northern peoples and their institutions, they stressed.

“Indians are not, and will never be, bland, middle class, miscellaneous Canadians. At present, then, we have a federal policy that has produced little integration and virtually no equality. Indians continue to co-exist with the Euro-Canadian immigrants as a separate people.”

(National Indian Brotherhood, in Ottawa)

“We have resisted assimilation. We continue to resist assimilation. And we will *always* resist assimilation. However, when we refer to Indian governments, we are not renouncing Canada or Confederation. We are *not* separatists. We are simply underlining the fact that we *are* distinct from the mass of Canadian society — legally, politically, racially, culturally and linguistically.”

(Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, in Regina)

“In the English language we do not even know what to call ourselves . . . but in our own language we know that we are the Anicinabe, the Inuit, the Dene, the Ininew; all meaning 'human beings' or 'people of the land.' No one will take that away from us.”

(Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, in Toronto)

Some Inuit asked for the creation of a new territory north of the tree line in which they would be the main residents and where they could establish their own regional and local governments, more responsive to their needs. They also wished to participate in regulatory bodies that govern coastal and off-shore resources, as well as the setting of quotas for marine mammals. To date, they said, the central government has "virtually excluded" them and in many instances "failed" to consult them.

Act now

Indian representatives to the Task Force voiced their concern that their requests for greater socio-cultural self-determination have gone largely unheeded. The only solution, some said, is sovereignty over their lands and political structures. The Indians of the territories, for example, oppose provincial status until their land claims have been settled. They see, in the creation of their own government in this area, a chance to deal on an equal basis with other Canadians. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indians proposed, rather, the addition of another form of government to the existing levels: Indian government. It too would be divided into local, regional and national jurisdictions. Indian government would include: the right to prepare budgets and submit them directly to Parliament for approval, financial and technical assistance in developing a viable economic base on the reserves, and the authority to levy taxes on reserve-based industry. They expressed confidence that, given access to financial resources, they would be able to look after their own needs and preserve their culture in dignity.

An Indian women's group called for "justice and recognition" of their legitimate rights, notwithstanding marriage to non-status Indians or non-Indians. "It seems inconceivable that [we lose our] birthright and our heritage at the moment that we enter into a sacred union with another child of God," lamented a brief from the Mohawk Indian Women of Caughnawaga [Quebec]. It urged that the government "act now" to pass legislation with "retroactive" effect.

Welcome back

The Métis — "we are not just another ethnic group" — insisted that their rights be protected by the constitution and that compensation be given them for the lands they either never got or lost immediately after their being granted. The government "must openly and willingly welcome us back into Confederation with full partnership, not as nuisances or appendages to the dominant group," commented the Ontario Métis and Non-status Indian Association.



Background

Acadia

French settlement in the territory known today as the maritime provinces began in 1604, four years before the founding of Quebec. Subsequently, for more than a century, Acadia, as it was then called, was a pawn in the great power struggles between France and England. It changed hands nine times before the Treaty of Utrecht established definite English control over it in 1713. The Acadians, however, refused to take the oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Eventually, in 1755, they were deported, some 6,000 of them being scattered to various parts of the world. Many returned when allowed to do so a decade later, but this time they settled far from the then existing English communities.

The reconstruction of Acadia has been slow. In fact, one could say that it is still going on today. Only in New Brunswick do the Acadians constitute a full-fledged society.

The west

From La Vérendrye, well known for his explorations (1731-43) to Father Maillard, who founded a parish in British Columbia in 1909, francophones have contributed to the development of the west. "Voyageurs" like those who accompanied Mackenzie and Fraser stayed in the land they had explored. Missionaries were able recruiters of French-speaking parishioners from the east.

For the francophone westerners and for the Métis, linguistic rights were incorporated in the acts that created Manitoba (1870) and the Northwest Territories (1875). These rights were discarded later, however, when the number of francophones began to decrease in proportion to the rest of the population.

Population statistics

In 1976 about 900,000, or 15.3 per cent, of the 5.9 million Canadians who gave French as their mother tongue lived outside Quebec. The largest concentration was in New Brunswick, where 224,000 individuals of French mother tongue made up 33.8 per cent of the population. The largest number, 484,000, lived in Ontario, where, however, they accounted for only 5.6 per cent of the population.

The following table provides a guide to what is happening to the French language minorities across Canada.

Percentage distribution of French language minorities by province, 1971

Province	French origin, 1971	French as mother tongue, 1971 (1976)	French as language most often spoken at home, 1971
		Per Cent	
Newfoundland	3.0	0.7 (0.5)	0.4
Prince Edward Island	13.7	6.6 (5.5)	3.9
Nova Scotia	10.2	5.0 (4.4)	3.4
New Brunswick	37.0	34.0 (33.0)	31.4
Ontario	9.6	6.3 (5.6)	4.6
Manitoba	8.8	6.1 (5.4)	4.0
Saskatchewan	6.1	3.4 (2.9)	1.7
Alberta	5.8	2.9 (2.4)	1.4
British Columbia	4.4	1.7 (1.6)	0.5
Yukon	6.7	2.4 (2.4)	0.7
Northwest Territories	6.5	3.3 (2.6)	1.7
Canada	28.7	26.9 (25.6)	25.7

Source: 1971 census of Canada, catalogue 92-736, language by ethnic groups
1976 census of Canada, catalogue 92-822, specified mother tongues



These figures demonstrate the high degree of assimilation taking place. The phenomenon is said to have many causes: the decline of the old social structures, urbanization, lower birth rates, inter-marriage, the language of the workplace, inadequate public services in French and the lack of interest on the part of some francophones in their own heritage.

Public policies

Steps have been taken in the last ten years, since the report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, to help the francophone minorities continue as distinct communities. Besides the Official Languages acts of Canada and of New Brunswick, some provinces have amended their school acts to authorize the use of French as a language of instruction where numbers warrant. As well, a number of provinces, Ontario and New Brunswick in particular, are making progress in the direction of providing court services in French.

Questions

What do francophone minorities think is needed to ensure their survival and progress? Is the trend to assimilation irreversible? What is the English-speaking majority willing to do? How do "francophone minorities" react to the possibility of secession by Quebec? How do they assess the support they get from the provincial and central governments? What action do they recommend?

“There are times when we have the uncomfortable feeling of being used as puppets.”

(La Société franco-canadienne de Calgary, in Calgary)

“How dare you, at this time, ask for our opinions? Have we not suffered enough from the sadism of Confederation without being coerced into telling our woes now that we have become a vanishing species?”

(in Vancouver)

“Though our ancestors were here first we have been treated too often like strangers in our own country.”

(in Halifax)

“Then came a deliberate and concerted effort on the part of English Canada to assimilate the French-speaking communities outside Quebec; it was probably saying to itself that Quebec's turn would eventually come.”

(L'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, in Toronto)

“As long as the anglophones do not have a change of attitude or of heart; as long as they continue to feel superior; as long as they expect us to become like them in every way before they will become our friends — we will continue to be strangers in our own country and we will keep on with our struggle as best we can. And we will be unhappy.”

(Société Saint-Pierre, in Halifax)

“One hundred and eleven years of conflict waged under the blanket of a Confederation that hardly includes and very often neglects the regions where there are French-speaking minorities . . . 111 years of intestinal quarreling and of constipated negotiations between the provincial and federal governments.”

(La Fédération des étudiants de l'Université de l'Acadie, in Moncton)

“Our basic message is as simple as it is tragic: the 900,000 francophones outside Quebec, scattered throughout the nine English-speaking provinces, are on the way to extinction. Lord Durham was right: as the weight of history and the influence of indifferent and sometimes hostile governments have made themselves felt, we have become the victims of . . . assimilation, conceived of by . . . the conquering nation. If we want to take our place as full-fledged citizens, we have to face up to the fact that our chances are getting smaller as history advances.”

(La Fédération des francophones hors Québec, in Ottawa)

“That we have survived to this day, is not only the result of our determination; it is also due to the fact that five out of six French Canadians are living within one province, Quebec.”

(L'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, in Toronto)

“Unless a radical change occurs before the Quebec referendum, we should not be surprised if the franco-Ontarians encourage Quebecers to vote for independence. If the Quebecers are the only ones to have a chance to survive, let them take it. Our own situation cannot get worse.”

(L'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, in Toronto)

Opinions

Francophone minority leaders from coast to coast stated, almost unanimously, their frustrations, concern, impatience and fears of assimilation. All voiced their determination to struggle, whatever the odds, for the conservation of values that they consider essential, not only to the fulfillment of their own aspirations, but beneficial to the country as a whole.

They addressed themselves to those factors which they believe threaten the survival of the minority communities as "distinct groups" in Canada. Several expressed concern about the possible consequences of the secession of Quebec on the future of francophone minorities in English Canada. Most were harshly critical of the insensitive, and even hostile, attitudes of the anglophone majority. Some questioned the "will" of some of their fellow francophones to fight for survival. Most criticized the "linguistic and cultural policies" of the central and provincial governments. Many pointed to the existing "economic and social realities" in which the minorities live as the "greatest threat" to their survival.

The real test of Canada

Minority francophones tended to present themselves as "different" from francophone Quebecers, though they related to them and were dependent on "the cultural and linguistic links which [tie them] to the francophone Quebec majority." Some participants spoke of Quebec as "the motor," "the driving force" which had made their own survival as minorities possible. The quiet revolution, explained a francophone group from Ontario, "started a process of revaluation of the franco-Ontarian identity!"

Many feared that they would "suffer" from a secession of Quebec from Canada, just as they are "benefiting" now from Quebec's assertiveness. "What would happen to us if Quebec secedes?" asked La Société franco-canadienne of Calgary. It conjectured that government support would probably end and that they would be assimilated by the "anglophone tide" or be reduced to token status.

Reflecting the fears and apprehensions of most Acadians, a group from Cape Breton explained that they oppose separatism because "we feel more secure with Quebec in a united and strong Canada than [being] at the mercy of the [people] of the maritime provinces." Another association hoped, however, that the election of the Parti Québécois would force anglophone Canadians "to face the reality of our anguish" and to realize that "our survival is a crucial element of Canadian unity," the "real test" of Canada.

Natural development

The strongest condemnation and demonstration of anger was directed at the local English-speaking communities for their lack of understanding, sensitivity or generosity. "Honest . . . judgement," argued a franco-Manitoban, "forces the conviction [on one] that the heavier share of responsibility has lain with English Canadians . . . they have been greedy and intolerant." A citizen in Montreal insisted that "the anglos should cry, 'mea culpa'; they are responsible for the present crisis." Some speakers observed that English Canadians have an "apparent lack of respect," an "irrational hostility towards and even a fear" of the French language.

The francophone minorities expressed resentment that they were not treated as a segment of one of the "founding peoples." We are considered, lamented a citizen of Moncton, "as one of the minorities." "The French Canadian is taken for granted, here and elsewhere," added a citizen in Toronto, "or worse yet, he is totally ignored." We are, one said, "the eternal minority, neglected." The refusal to grant them "the status which is due by right," concluded a group from Saskatchewan, "will lead to the disappearance of francophones in all but one of the Canadian provinces," and promote in our country the American "melting pot" philosophy.

Most anglophones who spoke on the subject seemed to doubt the capacity of the French minority groups to survive, with the possible exception of the Acadians of New Brunswick. Here and there, at hearings in all parts of Canada, English-speaking participants said, or implied, that they saw

“I call myself a franco-Ontarian and I am a francophone outside Quebec. Do you know what this means? It means that I no longer have a country. Because I see myself apart from Quebec, I do not have a country.”

(in Toronto)

“Everything has been said Our society is infested with intolerance, bad faith and injustice, but these are rarely recognized and we are never cured of them.”

(La Société des franco-Manitobains, in Winnipeg)

“I am a franco-Colombian. I feel disappointed, discouraged, disillusioned, forgotten, neglected, ignored, fed up, tired, misunderstood, confused and deprived of rights — of fundamental rights, of the right to be respected as a French Canadian in this country.”

(La Fédération jeunesse colombienne, in Vancouver)

“Whereas privileges are now completely taken for granted by the fat-cat majorities, the daily struggle for their very survival is the lot of the have-not minority groups.”

(La Fédération des francophones hors Québec, in Ottawa)

“Assimilation is a natural aspect of life, and to take steps to prevent assimilation is undemocratic.”

(from Toronto)

“A French Quebec and an English-only rest of Canada — they want French-only in Quebec, a very good idea, and we want no French here. They don’t want us, we don’t want them.”

(from Vancouver)

“In the final result the fault lies not with the government of the day but with the people. I speak with some experience in saying that there is a deep resentment on the part of a sizeable portion of our population towards the French language and culture and, indeed, the people for whom French is the native tongue.”

(in Winnipeg)

“We cannot [help] but feel some frustration at being treated as if we were just another minority group, like all the other ethnic groups that came to Canada. And yet history tells quite a different story. For this country we have given of ourselves, of our ideas, of our love, of our blood and tears.”

(from Ville de Laurentides, Quebec)

“When we came to Edmonton during the war, we had a small suite with an elderly couple who were unilingually French. We learned to play cards in their language. Strangely enough, their great-grandson is unable to attend class in one of our French language schools because his mother does not use French in the home — such a pity!”

(in Edmonton)

“I live in Halifax, I’m a citizen of Canada, and the kind of Canada that will suit me best is one where French-speaking people are comfortable, in all the proper and significant and reasonable meanings of that word.”

(in Halifax)

4. The French communities outside Quebec

assimilation as a "natural development," and consequently, that the French minorities should not be treated differently from any other local ethnic minority group. Reflecting this point, a citizen from Toronto declared: "The French are a minority and must be considered as such. There are too few of them . . . to warrant and justify the expense of billions of dollars." Other speakers contended, as did one resident of Ontario, that Canada cannot have "first, second and third class citizens and expect to have 'a united Canada.'" A few felt that the French-speaking minorities in English Canada have been treated "far more liberally" than the English-speaking minority in Quebec today. A Torontonion thought that "to take steps to prevent assimilation is undemocratic."

Some francophone speakers occasionally complained that their own fellow francophones were not sufficiently dedicated to the cause of French-Canadian survival and progress. French Canadians, "in too great a number, unfortunately," regretted a citizen of Ottawa, "have given up, have assimilated, most of them voluntarily. They don't speak French anymore to their own children." An Acadian from New Brunswick declared that: "people without faith. . . who don't know how to speak their own language. . . who are divided, are seldom respected."

The Task Force heard little about French communities outside Quebec at its two Quebec meetings, except as historical examples of English Canada's unwillingness to accept duality. A few speakers had views on their present condition such as: "all minorities are due for assimilation"; the francophone minorities outside of Quebec are maintained "by artificial respiration"; Their survival presents "an abominable confusion which annoys everybody."

Cultural malnutrition

Much of the criticism of the minority francophones was directed at the education policies of the provincial governments. Many of their leaders maintained that the "bilingual" school systems had led to an increase in the assimilation rate of young francophones. In their view, the schools were "one of the national cemeteries of our language and culture." "Education in French," argued others, is a "privilege" granted to francophones by the government. An Alberta group concluded that the present school system of "privileges" does not function effectively, since many francophones find "the expense" involved in assuring their children access to a French language education "too costly in terms of time, money and human dignity."

From coast to coast the Task Force was inundated with similar grievances, often expressed in dramatic fashion. In Winnipeg, representatives of the francophone minority wheeled in an impressive number of studies and reports and placed them before the Commissioners, saying, "It has all been said." In British Columbia, a minute's silence was observed to mark the fate of minority francophone communities generally, and when the Task Force met in Ottawa, a symbolic funeral procession was staged by franco-Ontarians. In Saskatchewan and Alberta, the francophones pointed out that they possess no guarantee of French language education or of the use of French in the provision of government services. Franco-Manitobans told the Commissioners that, although Manitoba was declared constitutionally bilingual in legislation and judicial matters by the Manitoba Act of 1870, the provincial government refused formally to acknowledge the status of the French language. The "vast majority" of Manitobans, confessed a Winnipegger, are "simply unsympathetic" to the call for reassertion of linguistic rights in Manitoba. They regard French language rights as "a nuisance and an annoyance, and an expensive one at that." Some franco-Ontarians labelled their provincial government's efforts to achieve "equality" in government services as "dismal," be it in the fields "of health, of justice or any other." The same views were expressed in the Atlantic provinces. A Yukoner put it in one sentence: "We suffer here from cultural malnutrition."

The activities of the central government, acting through the Official Languages Act and the Department of the Secretary of State, were often characterized as timid, insufficient and misdirected. The federal policy of bilingualism, argued some, exists "only in theory." Others chastised the central government for its delays in implementing French language educational and cultural activities, for "negotiating reluctantly with the francophones," and for adopting "solutions which are politically expedient." The minority francophones, concluded some, had gone from a "clandestine existence" to a state of "fragile dependence upon the federal government whose programs fail to meet the comprehensive needs of the francophone community."

“The vast majority of Manitobans are simply unsympathetic to the call for the reassertion of linguistic rights in Manitoba. They regard French-language rights as a nuisance and an annoyance, and an expensive one at that. The issue is whether non French-speaking Canadians outside Quebec will recognize in sufficient time that they must alter their present attitude, that Quebec's willingness to remain in Confederation depends on the respect we are prepared to accord to French-speaking Canadians who live in or visit English-speaking areas.”

(in Winnipeg)

“It is unacceptable that in our own province we cannot die in French, be sick in French, have police services in French, phone in French, eat out in French, in the six main cities of the province and elsewhere.”

(La Fédération des Dames d'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, in Moncton)

“We have too often dreamed the impossible dream, as we hoped petitions for the Acadian community would be taken seriously by the so-called responsible authorities. Alas — we must realize that the whole thing is a farce and a nightmare. In this so-called bilingual Canada and in their so-called bilingual New Brunswick, where all French-speaking and English-speaking people are seen as equal, some are more equal than others.”

(in Moncton)

“The bilingual theory did not work well for us. We are being assimilated at an alarming rate. Bilingualism has served the purposes of assimilation and we can no longer accept this in 1978.”

(From Cap Pelé, New Brunswick)

“In abolishing this right, [the right to education in the French language] the anglophone provinces deliberately carried out what amounts to cultural genocide of the French fact in Canada. The result is that out of one million so-called francophones outside Quebec, half of them are now unable to speak French. It seems that one aspect of the history of Canada has been based on fighting and destroying one common enemy — the French element.”

(in Regina)

“Each and every day, franco-Ontarians are being refused the services they need in French. Whether these involve health, justice or other services, they are not available in French. Still, franco-Ontarians are full-fledged citizens and they play a part in the economic and industrial development of Ontario. In Quebec, the anglophones' rights have always been recognized. Even with Bill 101, the right to education in their mother tongue is safeguarded and all the basic services are provided in their own language. Quebec has always respected its minority. But what about the francophones outside Quebec? Why did they have to struggle and why are they still struggling for their rights?”

(in Toronto)

“And if that is not clear enough, may we remind the members of the federal government that franco-Ontarians cannot, under the present circumstances, afford to lose the least scrap of what they are entitled to.”

(Le Comité de coordination de l'Union des parents et des contribuables de Carleton, in Toronto)

“Very few residents of Saskatchewan have experienced francophone culture first hand. The French fact in Saskatchewan continues to be a matter of bilingual labels and a small community of francophones, smaller by far than the communities of German or Ukrainian speakers.”

(Premier Blakeney, in Regina)

Disappearing from the map

Many francophone minority leaders claimed that their survival was threatened, not only by the failure of government policies, but by the "existing economic and social realities." "There are too many [sectors] we don't own — our economy, our political levers, our peatbags in the northeast . . . we only own a monopoly on unemployment and social welfare," said a citizen from Caraquet.

Others talked about the wide-spread disappearance of family farms, the decline of coastal fishing caused by the increasing presence of foreign ships, and the significant emigration of francophones to large anglophone centres. For one Acadian, the economic situation is "a comedy and a nightmare," which forces the Acadians "to export themselves in order to live." He talked about "the spectre of a second deportation," a "hemorrhage," "a bleeding of Acadia." Said a group in Saskatchewan: "Our villages are disappearing from the map. . . and by the year 2000 we will be as rare as the buffalo or the whooping crane. . . species subject to the most energetic and touching attention on the part of authorities who take all the measures needed to prevent their extinction."

Conversely, some participants at the hearings contended that in spite of many constraints, francophones, particularly in recent years, have made "progress toward the recognition of their language and culture" through the provision of French television and radio, increased school rights and the formation of various cultural associations. It was at times admitted that there had been an "increased awareness," however tentative, among the English-speaking majority of the needs of the French Canadians. Reflecting on the progress, New Brunswick's Premier Hatfield commented "that it has not been easy or automatic, it has been resisted by some . . . Still others want to deny the reality which makes that progress essential. But the vast majority of New Brunswickers in both language groups believe in the necessity of that effort."

Wherever numbers warrant

Across Canada, the Task Force was told by provincial representatives, sometimes in private meetings, that steps were being taken to provide more adequate public service in French "wherever numbers warrant." Some of them stated, sometimes publicly, that schooling in French was now generally available to most francophones who wished to avail themselves of it. Premier Davis of Ontario believed that what Ontario "has done and is doing, is a significant indicator of our commitment to provide fairly, adequately and realistically for minority language requirements." Premier Hatfield, in defending the language policies of his government, maintained that the Official Languages Act of New Brunswick "enshrines" the "linguistic rights" of the Acadian minority "by guaranteeing access to the courts, to the elementary and secondary school system and to the provincial government" in the official language of the citizen's choice. Some provincial premiers pointed out that it was for the provinces to respond to the needs of their minorities, as they saw appropriate.

Many of the supporters of multiculturalism remarked that the recognition of linguistic duality was not only in the interest of the French minority communities; it coincided with and provided support to "each ethnic group [wishing] to assert its needs and its special interests in the national unity debate." Consequently, any new constitutional arrangement should recognize, as one citizen of Toronto suggested, that Canada is a "multicultural society composed of two major language groups." If two languages and cultures are accepted, some ethnic community representatives reasoned, others will come to be seen as assets.

A distinct identity

Many Acadians of New Brunswick spoke in moving terms of their pride in their past and of their determination to make progress in the future. They presented themselves as a community endowed with "a distinct political, social and cultural identity," possessing a growing network of institutions: primary and secondary schools, a university, parishes, municipal councils, associations and business enterprises of all kinds. Some said they had the right and the power to govern their own affairs in their regions, "an inalienable right" argued one group "to define and

“The Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission and the government implemented an irregular form of bilingualism within the public service, which I maintain was the first factor, or at least one of the first, to spread the seeds of disunity among all Canadians. This implementation caused not only disharmony among the public servants, but among Canadians generally.”

(Leonard Jones, MP, in Moncton)

“Bilingualism is the chief source of the disunity in Canada today and as long as the Official Languages Act continues as law we will have continued division.”

(from St. John)

“Since 1950 there has been a constant emigration of Acadians to anglophone areas in the rest of Canada. Acadia is having a hemorrhage that must be stopped before it bleeds to death.”

(from Cap Pelé, New Brunswick)

“We have organized our own parishes, our convents, our French-language schools and our socially, religiously and culturally-oriented French-Canadian movements. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of French-speaking professionals and businessmen and French social services do not exist. To earn a living, we learned English.”

(Comité d'action francophone, North Bay, in Toronto)

“As for me, I want to travel across Canada and I want to feel at home. Also, I want the other provinces to realize that French-language schools are needed all over the country, to help the minorities who need to protect their culture.”

(in Quebec City)

“If I want to work, I am obliged to get out of Caraquet . . . If I want to succeed, I must assimilate.”

(in Moncton)

“Progress has not been easy or automatic. It is resisted by some. Many others find its pace too rapid or agonizingly slow. Still others want to deny the reality which makes that progress essential. But the vast majority of New Brunswickers, in both language groups, believe in the necessity of that effort and we have enshrined our commitment in our own Official Languages Act which was passed unanimously by the New Brunswick Legislature in 1969 and became fully operative on July 1 of this year. That act guarantees access to the courts, to the elementary and secondary school systems and to the provincial government in the official language of choice and, since the passage of Bill 22 in Quebec, it makes New Brunswick the only officially bilingual province in Canada.”

(Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick, in Moncton)

“When the underdogs feel that the effort shown in restoring full understanding and respect between the linguistic communities stems from the heart, and not from political expedience, the climate to full communication and cooperation might then be established.”

(from Toronto)

carry out our cultural, social and political objectives within the New Brunswick community. The English population must awaken to that reality."

Most Acadians in New Brunswick and elsewhere opposed maritime union, a move which, they argued, would further weaken their political power — already limited — in the face of the larger anglophone community.

There was little doubt, however, judging from the Moncton hearings, that some of the Acadian youth of New Brunswick were fascinated by Quebec politics, and were adopting much of the philosophy and style of Quebec nationalist movements. In contrast, some other Acadians in New Brunswick and in the Atlantic provinces made a point of declaring their faith in a renewed Canada.

“We demand of our provincial government that it recognize French as an official language of instruction in our province, with the same status as English, and that it, along with the federal authorities, take all necessary measures to have this right respected.”

(L'Association culturelle franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan, in Regina)

“Canadian Parents for French feels that from the modest beginnings of language learning in noon-hour and after-school programs must come a policy on second-language learning that will effectively prepare our children to communicate comfortably with French-speaking Canadians and to work and learn successfully in an increasingly bilingual Canada.”

(Canadian Parents for French, from Toronto)

“The only bilingual province the New Brunswick Acadians can consider to be acceptable will be one in which they are guaranteed equal rights with the anglophone community in all those areas which are essential to the Acadian way of life. . . . Such legislation must not only deal with government services but must also provide for all the means to further the development of both human and material resources of the Acadian community.”

(La Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick, in Moncton)

“To us, however, this recognition of the French fact is not a threat to our aspirations. To the contrary, it is the recognition of this duality that forces us all to accept [the fact] that unity does not and cannot come from uniformity. It is the acceptance of this concept which gives each province, each region and each ethnic group the right to assert its needs and its special interests in the national unity debate.”

(Winnipeg Jewish Community Council, in Winnipeg)

“In spite of their past vicissitudes and their present difficulties, Acadians have been and still are a people with a political, social and distinct cultural identity.”

(La Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick, in Moncton)

“Quebecers are known as a founding people and so are the anglophones, but the Acadians, it should be remembered, were the first in North America and at one time they owned three provinces.”

(From Bas Caraquet, New Brunswick)

“Even though Acadians are on edge, nevertheless, they have kept their heads cool and their minds clear and vigilant.”

(in Moncton)

“If ever a people has shown guts, it is the Acadians, but it is difficult to hold up one's head when your only hope is to survive as an Acadian.”

(in Moncton)

“They have given themselves a flag, a national anthem and consider themselves to be a full-fledged people.”

(in Moncton)

Proposals

Skeptical after two centuries of indifference or hostility on the part of the English-speaking majority, the francophone minorities everywhere requested legal guarantees of their existence as communities. "Time is running out," warned a francophone from Toronto, "and no smokescreen should [obstruct] the right of French Canadians to be recognized across Canada . . ." "We need the massive intervention of governments," added a franco-Ontarian group, "so as to feel wanted and protected." The Task Force heard repeatedly of the need also for English-speaking Canadians to demonstrate a higher level of understanding and support for the "fragile" francophone minorities in their midst.

Bill 101 included

The entrenchment of language rights in a new Canadian constitution and the establishment of French as an official language in the areas of education and public administration and in the courts, at both the federal and provincial levels, were considered to be of fundamental importance by francophone minority representatives everywhere. Reflecting the position of most, a group from Calgary requested that "anywhere in Canada where important [numbers of] French or English groups of persons live, they should be able to discuss their problems at any level of government in their own maternal language."

In the matter of government services, this meant that more attention should be given and more public funds should be allocated to the "provision" of social services in French. It entailed that increased French services, at the provincial level, in schools, cultural centres, courts and hospitals "should be available as a matter of course." "It is intolerable," said the Federation des Dames D'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, "that we should not be allowed to be sick . . . to telephone . . . to eat . . . and to die in French in the six principal towns of this province." The idea was frequently expressed that the French minorities in English-speaking provinces should receive the same treatment as the English-speaking minority in Quebec, "Bill 101 included." The francophones said that this law, in matters of education, would suit them perfectly.

In the field of education, many participants, both anglophone and francophone, supported the right of the official language minorities "to have schools established in which the language of instruction, administration, and communication" would be French "as prescribed by the democratic way of life," as an English-speaking Ontarian wrote. Several participants spoke of the need to protect the "parents' natural right to educate their children not only in the language of their choice, but also in the religion of their choice."

A federal role in the protection of French minority rights

Although education was legitimately seen to be a matter of provincial jurisdiction, there was more than the occasional demand for some federal responsibility in this field. Typical was the comment of a francophone group from Toronto: "The Canadian constitution could stand [some rethinking] in order to give the federal government the power of intervening in relation to minority rights." Another group insisted that "federal and/or provincial assistance be provided for the teaching and use of the other language." "Only the central government, reacting to pressures from both major communities, can guarantee the rights of minorities, if it really wants to," contended one francophone group from Ontario. Another association recommended that a linguistic dimension be added to the religious dimension in Section 93 in the BNA Act which would permit federal control over the educational destiny of minorities. "Provincial safeguards for minority rights," added another, "mean nothing." Others maintained, however, as did a professor from Calgary, that the major responsibility for protecting the rights of minorities should be left in the hands of the provincial governments.

The right to prosper

Some francophone groups requested that the constitution include a clear, unequivocal guarantee "that Canada's minority groups" have "the right to expand and prosper." To accomplish this, the constitution should recognize that "Canada's minorities must be given financial assistance in their

“All we want is to preserve our beloved culture, to keep the little we have. Our culture does not come from France or anywhere else. It is suited to our country as we developed it and as we have it here.”

(in Moncton)

“We are not interested in an Acadia that would exist only in the hearts and minds of the people. What we want is for Acadia to be something real, something we can love, something we can grasp, something that belongs to us.”

(Le Parti Acadien, in Moncton)

cultural and artistic activities." We must have the means, argued one group, to "awaken" the interest of the francophones in their culture, and to "develop a leadership that will promote French provincially . . . [to prepare] school trustees, administrators, economists, financiers and political leaders." Others insisted that the constitution should guarantee francophones "access to the French culture in its multiple aspects and essential manifestations." The expansion of local broadcasting facilities in the French language was most often mentioned in this regard.

In many instances, in the west and in Acadia, many francophone minority leaders suggested the "creation of francophone economic regions" to curtail the rural exodus of francophones toward other regions of Canada and the cities of the maritimes. Some urged that the economic policies of the provincial governments and the practices of the private industrial sectors "should encourage the development of each francophone within his or her region." Other groups proposed the establishment of local technical and professional schools and "teams of community development agents" that would work to help create employment and stimulate the local economy.

We should think about it

The Parti Acadien maintained that the solution to many Acadian problems depended on the creation of an autonomous province of Acadia in New Brunswick. "We should think about it," said a man from Cap Pelé. Some Acadians believed that they had the "potential" to do it, and that only with "their own territory and its political management" would they be in a position to "protect" themselves adequately. Others doubted that they did have such potential, though many called for an "acceptable" degree of "economic, social, political and cultural" autonomy.

5. The English-speaking community in Quebec

Background

In 1976, the 800,000 Canadians in Quebec who claimed English as their mother tongue constituted 12.8 per cent (13.1 per cent in 1971) of the population of the province. Some 21.7 per cent of the population of Metropolitan Montreal and significant groups in the eastern townships and in the Ottawa valley were English-speaking.

Because of their long and close identification with the economic life of the province, English-speaking Quebecers have traditionally enjoyed an influence greater than their numbers might lead one to expect. They have developed a complete network of social and economic institutions, particularly in Montreal, which has made it possible for most of them to live their lives exclusively in the English language. This situation was sometimes reinforced by the often-repeated view that French-speaking Canadians were not very interested in business. Many who were, or became interested, were often obliged to work mainly in English to be successful.

Because of the prominence of the English language in Canada and throughout North America, most non-English, non-French immigrants in Metropolitan Montreal chose to integrate or assimilate into the English-speaking community. In 1975, for instance, approximately 90 per cent of immigrant children were enrolled in English schools, the Task Force was informed. In this way, immigration compensated for the relative decline of the "British ethnic" population in Quebec and permitted the maintenance of the English social and economic infrastructure.

The following table contrasts the fate of the French language outside Quebec, which was spoken by less than half the people who claimed French origin, and of the English language in Quebec, which was spoken by 39 per cent more than those who claimed British origin:

French and English minorities in Canada, 1971

Cultural characteristics	French outside Quebec	English in Quebec
	number	
Ethnic origin	1,420,760	640,040
Mother tongue 1976	926,305 (897,960)	788,835 (800,680)
Language most often spoken at home	675,925	887,875

Sources: 1971 census of Canada, catalogue 92-736, language by ethnic groups
1976 census of Canada, catalogue 92-822, specified mother tongues

Changing situation

In recent years, the growing assertiveness of the French-speaking majority in Quebec has led the



5. The English-speaking community in Quebec

English-speaking community to question its assumptions and, generally speaking, to adjust its institutional framework to new circumstances. This process has accelerated further since the election of the Parti Québécois in November 1976 and the passage of Bill 101, which calls on immigrants and English-speaking Canadian migrants to attend French schools and promotes a greater use of French in business. In 1977, for example, 27.5 per cent of children whose mother tongue was other than English or French were enrolled in French schools, the Task Force was informed.

Questions

How does the English community in Quebec react to these changes? How does it see the past and the future? What do French Quebecers and English Canadians outside Quebec have to say on this subject?

“A people who have contributed to the educational, public health and welfare system and agriculture of a nation — to say nothing of the investment and contribution that has been made by the anglophone Quebecer to the industrial development of Quebec and Canada — do not quickly or lightly walk away from their homes, their land and their people. We see ourselves as Québécois as much as any of our francophone compatriots and we do not believe for one minute that we cannot participate together with all Québécois in building a better Quebec and a better Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“This part of Quebec's non-francophone population has changed considerably in recent years. One need only look to the numerous French-language immersion programs in English schools to witness the widespread acceptance within this community that French is to be the primary language of work in the province and the common language of all Québécois. The members of Participation Quebec and the majority of non-francophones — although opposed to certain extremely restrictive aspects of Bill 101 — regard this linguistic reality as logical and reasonable. But it is not the necessity of functioning in French that has alarmed the majority of non-francophones. It is the prospect that Quebec — no matter what its political future — may abandon its long-standing effort to create an increasingly open, tolerant and pluralistic society.”

(Participation Quebec, in Montreal)

“We have learned enough from each other to know how many steps we each have to take in order to reach a common goal. We have also known the rewards of bilingualism when we have achieved it for ourselves or our children. We have seen the benefits of an open society ... we have collaborated together in the professions; we have enjoyed newspapers, radio, television, theatre and the exchange of ideas in two languages.”

(in Montreal)

“We can testify before the rest of this country that to strive to ensure that people can work in their own language is well worth the effort, and to provide a measure of bilingualism wherever possible is to open the minds and hearts of people and give them psychological benefits that are not enjoyed in a unilingual state.”

(in Montreal)

“... Bill 101 discriminates against the non-francophone population of Quebec. The present situation in Quebec is intolerable.”

(in Montreal)

“We are in full support of the primary aims of the French Language Charter of Quebec. ... What we object to are the means adopted. ... Our parents want their children to learn both languages. They feel that these laws have not enhanced the status of the French language. On the contrary, they find the legislation demeaning and most of them are seeking ways to circumvent it.”

(The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, in Montreal)

“There's a lot of us anglophone workers in Quebec. I'm not a rich man, we're not rich, we're not the exploiters. But first, we're ignored by the federal government and second, the province of Quebec not only ignores us, but looks down on us as well.”

(in Montreal)

Opinions

The English-speaking community in Quebec speaks

Among English-speaking Quebecers, there appeared to be, above all, at the Task Force hearings, a desire to understand the new Quebec and to be accepted by French Quebecers.

Of folkloric memory

Some participants declared themselves to be "true Quebecers." "We resent absolutely any implication that the Quebec people consist of the [French] ethnic majority alone," said one of them in Montreal. "Anglophones have lived, worked and contributed to the general welfare of this society We will continue to do so." Others regretted the near isolation, "the two solitudes," which had divided English and French. Not only were they sympathetic to the desire of French-speaking Quebecers to occupy a larger place in the economic life of the province, but this was already being demonstrated. Some spoke of the "rewards of bilingualism." "Despite our failures," said a representative of Participation Quebec, "we have succeeded in working together in many phases of Quebec life."

Some spoke of the difficulties of adapting to "minority status." To be "rather abruptly confronted with the overwhelming fact of our minority status," said one person from the eastern townships, was "potentially frightening." Others deplored not being "accepted," even "detested" by the French Quebecers, especially by those nationalists who see them as the 'maudits Anglais' of folkloric memory."

Counterproductive

The focus of the greatest discontent was Bill 101, its spirit, its tone and part of its content. The clauses restricting freedom of access to English schools for immigrants and Canadians from other provinces were widely condemned as attaching too much importance to the idea of ethnicity. "We submit," said the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, "that limitation of individual or group rights endangers the freedoms of all the members of this society." "It is hard," said a professor, "to comprehend that members of a language group that has experienced the hardships of inequality would pass legislation that removes existing rights and hence opportunities." It will, he suggested, "be counterproductive from the viewpoint of francophones' interests."

To some participants, the bill's original definition of a Quebecer as a French-speaking person (later amended) was especially ominous. A few saw the government's policies as anticipating the disappearance of the English community in Quebec. Said one English-speaking Montrealer, "Bill 101 is an attempt by the government of Quebec to destroy the anglophone community of Quebec." To a spokesman for the English-speaking Provincial Association of Catholic Teachers, the outcome was bound to be at least a "drastic reduction of the English-speaking community." "Nowhere," said a letter from St. Lambert, "do I hear of English minority rights."

Vulnerable

There appeared to be a strong feeling among English-speaking Quebecers that most French Quebecers have a distorted view of them. It was pointed out, with statistics, that most English-speaking Quebecers were not business tycoons, that some lived at the poverty level and that, in rural areas in particular, some felt "isolated" and "vulnerable." The Eastern Townships Citizens Association observed that the dominance of French in government, in the farmers' union and elsewhere, meant that English-speaking citizens could not contribute to Quebec as much as they would wish. From others came a catalogue of the contributions English Quebecers have made to the province.

Some speakers emphasized that the English community had as many different attitudes and views as any other. The English media "anti-Quebec campaign" was not necessarily representative of the English as a whole, said one citizen. There were English-speaking workers in

“We reject absolutely any implication that the Quebec people consist of the ethnic majority alone. Anglophones have lived, worked and contributed to the general welfare of this society. We are doing so now and we will continue to do so.”

(in Montreal)

“... for far to many English-speaking Canadians outside Quebec, we apparently do not exist. No political party finds it expedient to speak for us, let alone to us, and we are beginning to develop a deep neurosis, a feeling that perhaps we exist only as a figment of the imagination of the Société Saint Jean-Baptiste.”

(in Montreal)

“The anglophone minority in Quebec had better assimilate with the francophone majority or get out.”

(in Montréal)

“Believe me, we’re just as hot-blooded, we have the same feelings as our ancestors. Mind you, I’m not saying we have more personality, or more fun than the English, but you have to admit that we really like to kick up a row.”

(in Montreal)

“For myself, I’d like the anglophones to understand that it’s not just a question of language — I would hate people to think it’s only a question of language. It’s really an economic question and more like a situation where the exploited are facing up to the exploiters.”

(in Quebec City)

“The first job I had was with the *Quebec Chronicle*, the first English newspaper in North America. Now, I had to speak English there, if you please. There was an English guy who worked with me, called Thefford, who wanted to learn French. Well, after two years, I had learned English but he hadn’t learned any French.”

(in Montreal)

“French Canadians were always refused the opportunity to participate in the leadership of the various big Canadian companies. I remember that once, when a federal MP, Gilles Grégoire, asked Mr. Gordon of the CNR why there were no French Canadians on the administration board, Mr. Gordon answered that none were qualified. Six months afterwards, a French Canadian was vice-president of the CNR. It always has been that way and you wonder, why?”

(in Montreal)

“The English sons and daughters were going to McGill University and getting a good education in business, law, medicine, etc., while the poor French Canadian in the University of Montreal was being taught the classics which equipped him with very little business knowledge. It’s natural for the French Canadian to be resentful of this, but it’s only in recent times that Quebec has escaped the clutches of the Church and its dominance in education.”

(in Vancouver)

5. The English-speaking community in Quebec

Quebec who "thought progressively," who did not share the antipathies of the anglophone bosses and of the media. He spoke in French to stress his point. Yet, he said, not only were people holding his viewpoint ignored, they were often resented.

Some participants deplored the lack of strong spokesmen for English-speaking Quebecers, particularly in the central and provincial governments and the insignificant anglophone presence in the Quebec public service "where they are now less than one half of one per cent of the total," according to the Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations.

Privileged

To some French-speaking participants, Bill 101 was crucial, a "necessity." It was vital, said one, to stem a "catastrophic" situation that involved their own assimilation. Its chief weakness, said another, was that it didn't go far enough. Others believed that the principle of choice of language should be restored. Some thought the English minority would have to be assimilated, "like all minorities," sooner or later. Looking ahead to a possible Quebec independence, one speaker said that Ottawa should be prepared to help those English Quebecers who feel they must leave.

There was a lot said about the "arrogance" and the "insensitivity" of the Quebec English minority. Their unwillingness to speak French had forced francophones to "bear the whole cost of bilingualism." The English minority was seen as "privileged," and this was especially true when it was compared to French minorities elsewhere. If French Quebecers had come to feel a certain superiority, said one speaker, it was only in compensation for the past, a past which another participant called one of "exploitation."

Information submitted to the Task Force indicated that the promotion of French Canadians to upper management positions and to boards in Quebec business was taking place but still at a very slow pace. Of the 104 largest corporations in the province, noted several French-speaking businessmen, only thirteen were run by francophones. In the remaining ninety-one firms, only 9 per cent of the top jobs were held by francophones.

Will not produce better people

Outside Quebec, the majority of participants appeared to see the English minority in that province as an integral part of the Quebec society, as a group that has played a key role in its economic development and that of Canada. In the opinion of a Torontonian, a broad view would recognize that not all English Quebecers spoke English only, not all of Quebec's problems stemmed from oppression, nor were all Quebecers separatists.

A Winnipegger argued that "there could be little doubt" that the English Quebecers have been treated, until perhaps recently, "in a fashion that should have been edifying, not only to the rest of Canada, but to the world. Schools and government served citizens equally in the language of their choice." To a Vancouverite, the "manifest destiny of the French fact in Quebec" was to be unilingual. The Alliance for the Preservation of English in Canada said, in Halifax, that "the federal government's acceptance of [Bill 101] was an acquiescence to the obvious and inevitable."

From Regina came a letter regretting that "nationalism has been stirred up in Quebec, especially using language as a means of . . . creating an atmosphere of mistrust and anger." In the same city, a spokesman for the Royal Canadian Legion said, "one's ethnic and cultural background cannot be legislated" and to try to do so, said another participant, "will not produce better people, more jobs or better standards of living, nor will it guarantee the preservation of any particular culture. It will, however, tend to destroy the cultural and human rights of those who are legislated against and who are in a minority situation." Others condemned Bill 101, saying that attempts to exclude English from Quebec will hamper its economy, provoke exodus and isolate Quebec. But, in general, Quebec's English minority was seen as being in a strong position to look after itself.

Some expressed sympathy for the French Quebecers. In Whitehorse, a speaker said that "in many ways I think Yukoners can sense some of the isolation that Quebecers feel . . . We most assuredly are all isolated up here although not in any particular linguistic sense." In St. John's, the

“It’s my idea that Quebec separatism is powerfully motivated by a combination of the highest unemployment in the country and a bunch of spoiled, rotten anglophones in residence who have been telling people to ‘speak white.’ ”

(in Vancouver)

“... the English elite in Quebec have had the best of both worlds, and maybe things would be different if they were treated the same as the French minorities in Manitoba Small wonder French Quebecers are referred to in the same manner as the blacks of South Africa.”

(from Winnipeg)

“It is unquestionable that a significant proportion of the English minority in Quebec has not yet learned to speak French. It is an insult being perpetrated through ignorance or through prejudice.”

(in Vancouver)

“The history of our land has been one of oppression, exploitation and degradation. Québécois have never been equal partners in Canada; indeed, the story of their condition is well known — high unemployment, low wages, living under the thumb of the English-speaking Westmount Rhodesians.”

(in Vancouver)

“... the English Fact in Montreal shall become as invisible as the French Fact in Toronto. The latter is a necessary condition for the realization of the nationalistic yearnings nurtured by the Québécois for two hundred years.”

(from Vancouver)

“The action of the Parti Québécois in legislating Bill 101 was recognized as being legitimate, due to the fact that Quebec culture is threatened. The law was a result of the natural evolution of the French-speaking people of Quebec and was basically sound.”

(from Victoria)

“It doesn’t pay anybody to panic and leave the province of Quebec and yet this is what a lot of English people have done. English people who leave Quebec are doing very serious harm to national unity.”

(in Toronto)

“The knowledge that we are about to be hanged has concentrated our minds wonderfully.”

(in Montreal)

“If you want to change the situation, the best place to start is with yourself. As anglophone residents of Quebec, we feel that it is vital that we take responsibility for the wrongs of the past. . . . We are stubborn now in admitting that as a minority we are no longer calling the shots.”

(in Montreal)

local branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women declared that Newfoundlanders sympathize with Quebec's desire to maintain its culture because they feel the same sort of frustration and despair. They only wished they had as much muscle as the Québécois "to get their views across." In Calgary, a citizen regretted that French Canadians "are denied the full opportunity of enjoying the economy of their area by unfortunate circumstances." But he didn't see this as "the fault of western Canadians. In fact, many Quebecers' complaints are echoed in our part of the country."

“As Quebecers we have every wish to see a prosperous and vital society develop here, a society, moreover, in which every citizen can continue to feel that he belongs no less than any other citizen. We accept it as appropriate that French should be the primary language. We recognize that French is the language of the majority, and that French should be the common language of Quebec society. We agree that it should be possible for French-speaking Quebecers to live all aspects of life to the full in French. English-speaking Quebecers are under a very definite obligation to speak French if they wish to share in the life of Quebec with its French-speaking majority. Our commitment to the above statement remains firm.”

(in Montreal)

“I hope that we can grow new skins and maintain a strong, viable English-speaking minority community in Quebec, within a united Canada which provides the same opportunity for minority French-speaking communities in other provinces of Canada.”

(from Montreal)

“I’m an anglophone, English is my mother tongue. I settled down in Quebec a few years ago and I learned French. It’s funny but I know anglophones who were born and raised here who can’t say “bonjour” and “bonsoir.” And that’s when I really became aware of the kind of oppression felt by the French-speaking majority of Quebecers — and this applies to their work environment, the schools, everywhere! English is really the minority language in terms of population — but it has such a privileged position. It’s quite something to see that contradiction, and that’s why I’m in sympathy with the cause of Quebec independence!”

(in Montreal)

“There are Montreal anglophones who are prepared to make major linguistic and cultural accommodations. An indication of this is that they have opted to make their living in French when they could have continued to work in English.”

(in Montreal)

“Anything the commission can do to facilitate biculturalization of the Montreal English would contribute to relations between Quebec and the rest of the country. We must ensure that we transform the English community from being part of the problem of this country to being part of the solution in a restructured association.”

(in Montreal)

“There should be no thought of reaching equality by reducing the established rights of the English-speaking peoples of Quebec, but rather of elevating the rights of the French-speaking communities throughout Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“The official language minorities simply must be assured of priority status at some level. The alternative is tyranny by the majority, the perversion of democracy.”

(The Eastern Townships Citizens’ Association, in Montreal)

5. The English-speaking community in Quebec

Proposals

Begin to participate

The prevailing mood at the Task Force hearings was that English-speaking Quebecers should stay in Quebec, stand for their right to continue as a distinct community, and make a much greater effort to communicate with the majority. The Task Force heard from a number of associations dedicated to these objectives. "It is not enough to learn the language," emphasized one speaker. "Montreal anglophones must begin to participate in the educational, cultural, economic and social institutions of both linguistic communities." Only in this way will Montreal anglophones approach "bicultural status" and in so doing "break out of their self-imposed solitude in Quebec."

Perhaps, said one person, we anglophones of Quebec can help build "the necessary bridges" that would make greater understanding possible. This would require stronger leadership for Quebec's English community, especially in the central and provincial governments. It would require also a greater anglophone presence in the Quebec public service.

Some anglophone minority leaders contended that the English-speaking minority of the province would have to live in Quebec from now on "in much the same way as francophones have lived and worked throughout the rest of Canada for 100 years." A few expressed the belief that a "fuller integration" into the French community was required of them, and that only by working largely in French could one hope to live a full life in Quebec.

French rights, English rights

English-speaking Quebecers, like their francophone counterparts in other provinces, placed considerable emphasis on the need for a new Canadian constitution which would guarantee the linguistic and cultural rights of both official language minorities. These would be individual rights. Reflecting the views of most anglophone participants, one group argued that "in a free society, the individual's rights must take precedence over the rights of the collectivity." It was therefore recommended that the "right of parents to choose the most suitable education for their child in the official language of their choice be 'enshrined' in the constitution." Furthermore, many groups contended that all government services, at all levels, must be available in both official languages.

Some speakers were upset by what they saw as a double standard in a federal government which does not appear to demonstrate the same dedication to "English rights" in Quebec as it does to "French rights" in other parts of Canada. A few speakers specifically asked for financial support from the central government in legal action taken against some clauses of Bill 101.

A few anglophone participants thought that the central government should accept "direct responsibility" for "the cultural well-being of official language minority groups" throughout Canada. It is the only level of government, argued a citizen of Lennoxville, "with the necessary perspective, resources and breadth of concern" to assume such responsibilities.

Promote bilingualism in education

Quebec anglophone groups emphasized the need for federal financial support in implementing nation-wide cultural and educational policies and in promoting better understanding among Canadians of diverse cultural origins. Several urged the central government to "provide funds" for both first and second language programs "so that neither is learned at the expense of the other." This, it was argued, would ensure that all Canadian students had a better opportunity to learn both official languages. Others recommended that a national Ministry of Education be established which would "oversee" the teaching of second languages. A great diversity of ideas was submitted for central government action, ranging from exchange programs for teachers and students to a uniform version of Canadian history to be made a "compulsory subject" in all schools.

The central government was urged to reconsider its guidelines for allocation of monies to the provinces for language training "so that the real language needs of all of its citizens, including

“If there is one area where I think the federal government could get involved in education, it is to help English-speaking people in Quebec to learn French. The provincial authorities in Quebec will not help them — they do not want to help them — learn French. All they want to do, it appears, is to get them out of there.”

(in Edmonton)

“We recommend the use of various methods of communication to include films, telephone conference calls, and other audio-visual exchanges between all segments of the population, enabling all Canadians of varying ages, interests and pursuits to *see and speak* to each other. Since we realize that communication is a most important link, it must remain a federal responsibility.”

(in Montreal)

“In many areas of this province where the anglophone is relatively poor and often unilingual, he finds himself in a vulnerable position. He has no representation in the government of the province. He has no representation in the civil service of the province. He sees himself as immobile and he sees himself as isolated and cut-off. Whatever solution is arrived at, these people must not be sacrificed on the altar of compromise and expediency.”

(in Montreal)

“If Canada is restructured so as to provide all necessary guarantees to preserve and ensure the development of the French language and culture, will the anglophones of Quebec leave?”

(The Positive Action Committee, in Montreal)

“Ten or fifteen years from now, when the anglophone graduates of French schools and immersion courses are entering the labour force, and when the political seas in Quebec are calmer, the English who are integrating into the French community may be a different breed. Today, however, they are the English community's ‘marginal men.’ This rather special group is showing the English mainstream the way to future harmonious relations between the groups.”

(in Montreal)

“If the province of Quebec becomes independent in the future, one supposes that the people living there will have the choice of becoming Quebecers and thus losing their Canadian citizenship, or remaining Canadian citizens. Those who opt for the latter will have to emigrate to other provinces. That will be the first result of independence. Most of the people who go will have to leave their homes and their furniture behind and will lose their jobs. That will be the second result. To alleviate this, what does the federal government intend to do in order to compensate these people, morally and physically in terms of housing, employment, money. It is hard to accept the fact that helpless people will be expected to deal with such an intolerable situation.”

(from Quebec City)

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immigrants, to learn both French and English and to retain their mother tongue can be met." Some participants suggested that a "new constitutional arrangement" be implemented to ensure that the funds distributed by the central government to the provinces "to promote bilingualism in education be used as intended." There is a "grave risk of 'backlash'," the Task Force was told, if such federal money is "absorbed" into the general revenues or used to "subsidize" general administration.

There appeared to be a strong feeling, particularly among rural Quebec anglophones, that constitutional safeguards be provided which would guarantee English-speaking Quebecers the right "to have equal opportunity for employment." Said one citizen, "We are especially concerned about the young and recent graduates. There is a growing tendency towards racial discrimination in employment opportunities." Some called for the "greater equality of access for the non-French population in the Quebec public service and in public life generally."

Anglophone exodus

A special plea was made by several participants that the central government support English communities living outside Montreal, some of which were said to lead a precarious existence. Participants from the eastern townships recommended that the Secretary of State establish a permanent office to "monitor" the problems of the official language minorities. One participant asked for "some type of long-term assistance to the English language media of rural Quebec." Others recommended that the DREE programs and civil service decentralization be "restricted" to rural areas, which are afflicted with high unemployment, in order to help stop the "anglophone exodus" to the urban centres.

Short of separation

Nearly all of English-speaking Quebecers contended a "reconstructed Canada" would offer the "best guarantee" for their rights. Unless conditions are made "intolerable," argued one group, the Quebec anglophone "will remain and accept any reasonable policy, short of separation." However, in the event of Quebec's secession, some speakers asserted that "any part of Quebec can separate." Said one group: "The main principle of self-determination, as claimed by the proponents of sovereignty, could be invoked" by regions of Quebec. A participant called for the creation of a bilingual and multicultural province of West Quebec, incorporating portions of the eastern townships, the Gaspé and west Montreal. "The nationalists would have their wish," he added. "Their Quebec would be homogeneous and unilingual and French."

Suggestions from French-speaking participants on the future status of the anglophone minority in Quebec ranged all the way from the status quo to full assimilation.

Background

History, demography and diversity

Since Confederation, immigrants have come to Canada from all over the world, not only accelerating the growth of the population and the wealth of the country, but also increasing its cultural diversity. They have settled at will, here and there across the land, often forming distinctive groups and communities.

The census of 1871 shows the Canadian society as being composed of French, Irish, English, Scottish and German elements, in order of numerical strength. Other categories mentioned are Danish, Welsh, Swiss, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

Over the years, there has been great variety in the countries of origin and the settlement patterns of "new" Canadians. Chinese immigrated in significant numbers in the nineteenth century, some staying on the west coast, some moving eastward with the railway route. In the quarter-century preceding World War I, more than three million people arrived from northern, central and eastern Europe, settling mostly on the prairies. The next big wave came in the decade following World War II, bringing immigrants from central and western Europe and in greater numbers from the Mediterranean region. More recently, the Caribbean has been an important source of immigrants. Since 1945, most immigrants have gone to the major urban areas.

As a consequence of immigration, the non-British, non-French inhabitants, who constituted only one out of twelve Canadians in 1871, now number one out of four. According to the 1971 census, they totaled 5.5 million or 25 percent of the population. But their proportions differ greatly on a provincial basis, for example, one out of three in British Columbia, three out of ten in Ontario, one out of ten in Quebec.

More impressive still is the presence of ethno-cultural groups in the population distribution of major cities. In the core of Toronto and Vancouver, close to 50 percent of the children now entering primary schools are said to be of non-British, non-French origin.

There is hardly a facet of Canadian life not influenced by people of other than British or French origin. In the nineteenth century, they engaged mainly in land settlement, construction and transportation. In this century, they have made their way into industry, business, the arts, the professions, and more recently, into politics and public administration.

Policies

Immigration has had a great impact on our social and cultural policies. Programs at all levels of government have endeavoured to help immigrants adjust to Canadian society.

In 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau introduced a policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework," as the "most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians." He added: "Although there are two official languages, there is no official culture in Canada. . . . The government will support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society."

Assistance would go, in the words of the policy statement, to all Canadian groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop; to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society; to promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian groups; and to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages.

Most provinces have either accepted this policy informally and implemented it in their fields of jurisdiction, or enunciated their own. Quebec has followed suit this year in a document entitled, *La politique québécoise du développement culturel*.



Questions

What should be the relationship between multiculturalism and bilingualism and biculturalism, between the two main communities and the minority ethnic groups, and between minority French and other minority groups in English-speaking Canada?

“...we reject the use of the words ‘founding races.’ All of the ethnic groups, be they Jewish, Ukrainian, Chinese, English or French, who pioneered this land, particularly the west, can quite properly claim to be founders and builders of this country. . . . Having made this statement, we hasten to add that we acknowledge and accept . . . that the French Canadians have a different status from the rest of us.”

(Winnipeg Jewish Community Council, in Winnipeg)

“The sooner we learn to bury the two-nation concept and accept the multicultural concept, the better for all of Canada We gather all that is good from each cultural group living in Canada and form a distinctive Canadian nation. We are convinced that the federal government can further unity by supporting the one-nation philosophy based on multiculturalism.”

(Sudbury Regional Multicultural Centre, in Toronto)

“With even a cursory study of Canadian history it is clear that there were two founding races other than the natives, and all groups after the French and English cannot correctly be termed as founders.”

(in Winnipeg)

“If we are to talk meaningfully about a truly positive Canadian vision, such a vision must be placed in a multicultural setting and treated as such, rather than in a narrow French-English debate that has occupied much of our energies in the past.”

(Black United Front of Nova Scotia, in Halifax)

“The minority groups helped to build this nation too; they plowed the west with sweat and blood and they do wish to participate in keeping it together forever.”

(in Toronto)

“We agree that the French Canadians and the Anglo-Saxon Canadians have special constitutional and historical rights but only, and only, in the area of bilingualism. In any other field all Canadians will have equal rights and equal obligations. We are Canadians, no matter what our origin, and our first and most important obligation is to find and support a better and even a new sense of identity for Canadians.”

(in Regina)

“Unity cannot be imposed, it can only emerge through equal participation of its components. We have to bring equality to all regional and provincial levels in order to achieve a united Canada. An opportunity for equal participation has to be provided to all Canadians of various ethno-cultural backgrounds in this country.”

(The Progressive Pakistan-Canada Friendship Society, in Vancouver)

“The ethno-cultural communities now have the numerical and organizational capacity to exert an influence on Canada’s political development. It is rather astonishing that no proper representation of ethno-cultural groups, which amount to close to one-third of the population of the country, is reflected in the composition of the Task Force on Canadian Unity.”

(Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism, in Toronto)

Opinions

Although seldom rejecting English-French linguistic duality, nearly all the representatives of ethnic groups rejected the use of the words "two founding races," or "peoples," or "nations," as unacceptable and unwise. The expressions, they said, negate, or appear to negate, the contribution to Canada of groups other than the two main ones. These representatives recognized the fact of the "two major linguistic groups," but only as part of a "complex Canadian identity," as one citizen from Winnipeg put it. They saw the necessity of "integrating" into one or both of the linguistic mainstreams, but not at the price of assimilation.

Founders and builders

While they accepted Canada as being a bilingual country, ethno-cultural participants generally rejected attempts to define Canada as a bicultural country as well. "Bilingualism within the framework of multiculturalism" was a formula very much preferred. Canada, they said, "is a multi-cultural society," "a mosaic." In such a country, each ethnic group should be entitled to maintain its cultural heritage. Some cited statistics as evidence: 25 per cent of the population "belongs neither to the French nor to the British background"; the English themselves are a heterogeneous group (English, Irish, Scots and Welsh); and ethnic groups are more numerous in specific areas of the country than populations of French or even of English origin.

Other facts mentioned were historical. They pointed out that in many instances, notably in the "clearing of the west," the ethnic minorities were the "founders," the "builders," "the founding races of western Canada." And the contribution of ethno-cultural groups was expanding. "One's contribution," commented a Torontonion, "should not be judged on how many generations of Canadian citizenship he can claim." And we are not "an alien transitory phenomenon, but an indigenous Canadian dimension" said the Ukrainian Canadian Committee in Winnipeg.

Another point made was the value of preserving a variety of cultures. By truly accepting the ideal that ethno-cultural groups should also maintain their cultures, Canadians would be encouraging respect for diversity, recognized by so many of them as the very essence of their national identity. And if it is worthwhile, observed some participants, for the main communities to "insist on protecting their language and culture," "why shouldn't we?" The National Congress of Italian Canadians said, in Toronto, that the "majority groups" should "learn to absorb" some of the ideas of the new groups, just as they, the ethno-cultural groups, have been willing "to absorb good French and English values and traditions."

A special place

Many of the ethno-cultural groups appearing before the Task Force expressed "empathy" for French Canadians who had suffered indignities to their language and culture. A few said that the ethnic minorities had endured even more: "the injustices" suffered by French Canadians "fade into insignificance" when compared to those endured by ethnic groups, stated a Calgarian. A few were ready to "acknowledge and accept the fact that the French Canadians have a different status from the rest of us," "a special place," because of their "legal system" and of their "majority in Quebec." French Canadians, in turn, should be more willing to see the value of "cultural pluralism"; it would help minority groups to embrace bilingualism more wholeheartedly.

Bilingualism and multiculturalism actually reinforce each other, some speakers said. They saw their acceptance of bilingualism as a condition for the progress of multiculturalism. Otherwise, Canada would adopt the objective of social and cultural homogeneity — the melting pot.

The lack of influence of the ethnic groups in the "power structure" of the country was deplored by many: "a waste of talents"; "their voices should be heard." The Task Force itself was held up by many representatives of ethnic groups, such as the Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism, as a prime example of inadequate ethno-cultural representation.

Formal opposition to multiculturalism was seldom expressed. A small number of speakers, both anglophone and francophone, believed assimilation to be a social and political necessity for all

“The government can [make] a greater effort [to] work more closely with the minority groups. The government can give more financial support for multicultural activities; the government can help the minority groups to present or to improve their image through media such as television and publications. In other words, the government can do a great deal more to promote multiculturalism.”

(Chinese Society of Nova Scotia, in Halifax)

“It is only through political parity of all Canadians that the official policy of multiculturalism may finally have the meaning which it rightly deserves.”

(Multicultural Association of Fredericton, in Moncton)

“The Task Force must search for the kind of principle that was underlying multiculturalism when multiculturalism was created six or seven years ago; . . . that each and every human being, regardless of language, regardless of the country that he originates from, regardless of the province that he lives in is worthy of respect. . . . If Canada begins to be built on that kind of principle, then there will be room for everybody.”

(in Montreal)

“The other ethnic groups, who are smaller in numbers, are deeply troubled over this imposition of a bilingual and bicultural society because these ethnic groups are fearful that their own culture and their identities will be wiped out.”

(in Vancouver)

minority groups — "a democratic principle," said one. Multiculturalism is a "game played by first and second generation Canadians," wrote a North Bay resident. Spokesmen for francophone minority groups outside Quebec implied at times that multiculturalism was a device to reduce their own position, as one of the "two founding peoples," turning them into "just another minority group."

“Multiculturalism shouldn't just be limited to a lot of slogans and folklore. Rather, it should become a more tangible and real part of everyday life — in the instruction of peoples' languages of origin, in public schools, in the programs presented on radio and television and in the history books as well, where some recognition should be given to the important contribution made by the different ethnic groups.”

(in Montreal)

“Cultural survival of French Canadians gives hope to the survival of other cultures. Should French Canadians lose their identity, all other groups would become part of the homogeneous society.”

(The Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, in Toronto)

“In my opinion, some of the money that the Canadian government poured into French immersion should have been poured into cultural immersion, so that the media would be wise enough in reporting accurately and respectfully on individuals on all racial origins who aspire to make a contribution to Canada.”

(in Regina)

“The democratic rights of all minorities within Canada must be firmly entrenched in a new Canadian constitution so we all may finally feel secure in one country. Provincial guarantees on basic rights mean nothing.”

(in Quebec City)

“We strongly support the notion that any privilege granted to one group of people applies equally to all other Canadian citizens. The French have been in Quebec for many years and this cannot be disputed, but the historical accident of their being there should not be a prerequisite to obtaining greater rights than Canadians of ethnic origins other than English or French, especially when these rights do not apply to the aboriginal population.”

(The Canadian Polish Congress Inc., in Toronto)

“The new constitution should offer guarantees for the maintenance of the languages of the different ethnic groups, especially the larger ones like the Italians, the Germans, the Ukrainians, the Greeks, etc.”

(in Montreal)

“We cannot keep insisting that our rights and our privileges be dependent on how many generations we can count back in this country. The reality today is that we must create a new Canada. There are two major linguistic groups in this country today and that's why we need two official languages. There are many, many cultural groups in this country today. That's why we need a guarantee of multiculturalism.”

(in Toronto)

Proposals

Almost all the ethno-cultural groups who came before the Task Force looked to constitutional guarantees as their defence against assimilation. The British North America Act should be replaced with a new constitution "geared to the realities and needs of Canada today," asserted the Association of United Ukrainians. "Cultural freedom," the right of all Canadians to "preserve" their cultures, "recognition" of the role of the ethno-cultural groups in the development and enrichment of this country — these were some of the principles proposed by them for inclusion in a new constitution.

Transcending the boundaries

Some wanted the preamble of the constitution to contain a "paragraph depicting the diversity of the Canadian nation," but many more called for a specific statement of the principle of multiculturalism in the constitution itself and in federal statutes such as the Immigration Act. Some groups asked the Task Force to support their requests for statutory guarantees for "cultural pluralism" to the same extent as official languages are guaranteed. A few expressed fears of being "put aside and forgotten" in the haste of the government to "pacify the aspirations of the French in Canada."

The best ally against assimilation, in the view of some ethno-cultural leaders, would be an entrenched bill of individual rights, as a common bond between Canadians "transcending the boundaries of race, ethnicity and religion." The Ukrainian Canadian Committee in Winnipeg said that entrenched individual rights would serve as a guarantee "that democracy does not mean the imposition of uniformity by the majority."

How fragile

The Federation of Chinese Canadian Professionals in Toronto recalled the many years of racism and bigotry experienced by Chinese and Japanese immigrants to Canada. One group pointed to the 1970 October crisis as an example of "how fragile" human rights are and concluded that "relocation camps and internment centres may be just a step away."

A few groups advocated the entrenchment of "third language rights" in the constitution on an equal basis with English and French. Others did not recommend their constitutional entrenchment, but wanted to have the teaching of minority languages in the schools "wherever numbers warrant," guaranteed, possibly by provincial legislation. A Ukrainian group in Winnipeg held up the English-Ukrainian immersion programs in several Edmonton schools as an example of the success of such a policy. Several groups deplored the schools' failure to teach the historical beginnings and the contributions of ethno-cultural groups to the building of Canada.

While other groups appearing before the Task Force often pressed for increased provincial powers, most representatives of ethno-cultural groups expressed the hope that the federal support they are now receiving would not only be continued, but expanded. The federal ministry of state for multiculturalism should become a full ministry with its own departmental structure, some said. One group suggested that a liaison officer be appointed in the Privy Council Office to ensure that the concerns of all minority groups are reflected in the day-to-day operations of the relevant government ministries.

Representatives of various ethnic groups told the Task Force that Canada's multicultural character should be stressed more actively in the media, in both the private networks and the CBC. Multilingual broadcasting should be sanctioned by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and by Parliament.

Appointments to the Senate, the judiciary and central government agencies should be made to reflect the multicultural nature of Canadian society, some said. Creation of "ethnic seats" in Parliament deserved consideration, a few added.

Background

Geography and history have combined with ethnicity, culture, economics and politics to create deep-rooted regional communities in Canada.

Like duality, regionalism is a basic fact of Canadian life: it influences the way Canadians see themselves, the way they live and think, and how they conceive, build and operate their institutions.

The regional character of Canada was recognized from the outset, and "Confederation" was designed to unite the various communities for common purposes around a central government, while respecting their individual and particular aspirations represented mainly by provincial governments. Does Canada now exhibit a healthy balance between the "unity" of the whole and the "diversity" of the parts?

What is a region?

In Canada, as elsewhere, the concept of region is a many-sided one. The country is often defined as consisting of five regions: the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario, the west and the north. But are the economic interests and culture of Newfoundlanders sufficiently similar to those of the "maritimers" to constitute an Atlantic region? Is British Columbia psychologically and economically part of a western system or a region unto itself? How does urbanized and industrialized Manitoba fit into the concept of a prairie region that is identified mainly with agrarian products and natural resources development? Are the northern territories a region on their own or a natural extension of the "southern" provinces? Is the economic nexus between Ontario and Quebec substantial enough to justify speaking about "central Canada"? And are there not in Canada, regions within regions?

In the end, many Canadians resort to equating regions with provinces, a not unreasonable conclusion since the provinces provide the main political framework through which the regional communities express themselves.

Regional alienation

As will be seen in nearly every chapter of this report, the Task Force witnessed that feelings of regional alienation run deep. There is clearly a political element in it, as a result of the normal competition between provinces and between the provincial and central governments. There is also a psychological dimension, arising mainly from the geographic vastness, the historical development of the country and its federal form of government. The economic dimension of regionalism is probably the one that attracts most attention today: indeed, in Canada, the terms regionalism and economic disparity have become almost synonymous in meaning. This is understandable, considering the important economic differences between provinces: their populations vary greatly in size; some are more urban than others, with faster-growing cities; some, historically poorer than at present, are now richer; others, once prosperous, are now less so; some are already highly industrialized, others pin their hopes for the future on increasing the processing of their natural resources.

Regions and politics

The provincial governments regard themselves as the natural protectors of regional interests. In recent years, however, because of interprovincial linkages, groups of provinces, notably in the east and the west, have cooperated to a certain extent through regional inter-provincial conferences, committees and councils. Some commentators believe that a regrouping of the eastern and western provinces would bring about more evenly-balanced units with Ontario and Quebec, and consequently would improve the working of the federal system.

The central government responds to the requirements of regionalism in a diversity of ways, such as: ensuring regional representation in the Senate, cabinet and in public service appointments; by the creation of a department of regional economic expansion; by the recognition of regional



differences in the application of policies in areas such as procurement of supply and services, industrial infrastructure, the reduction of disparities and the deconcentration of the civil service. Nevertheless, "Ottawa" is often accused of giving insufficient recognition to regionalism in such areas as monetary, fiscal, transportation and commercial policy.

The many federal-provincial conferences, committees and councils which bring together politicians and officials from both orders of government provide the main forum for the reconciliation of national and regional interests. One consequence, however, of this process, which is known as "executive federalism," is that Canadian problems are often dealt with in their constitutional dimension rather than as matters of substance. Most are debated in terms of intergovernmental rivalries, thus exacerbating conflict and tensions.

Regionalism and nation-building

Canadians still hold conflicting views about regionalism as a foundation for nation-building. There are many who view regional loyalty and autonomy as a source of strength for the nation, and many who see regionalism as a kind of parochial, selfish attitude that detracts from Canada's ability to function as a single country. This controversy has become a very important aspect of the unity debate.

Questions

How do Canadians see regionalism? Is the debate mostly of interest to politicians, bureaucrats and business leaders or does it affect ordinary citizens? How strong is regionalism today? Are the similarities between regions greater than their differences? Should regionalism be encouraged? Should the economic and the political structures of the country reflect the regional realities of Canadian life more adequately? How should the regions be represented in the central decision-making process? Are the costs and benefits of the existence of Canada fairly distributed between the regions and the provinces?

“The Quebec separatism issue is not the only unity problem in Canada and just because we may solve the Quebec issue, this does not mean that the whole unity question will be resolved. The idea of the west separating from the east is becoming more and more popular as the injustices, or perceived injustices, loom greater in the minds of Canadians living west of Ontario.”

(in Regina)

“The British North America Act does not recognize nor safeguard Canada's foundation stone — that is, regionalism. The two founding peoples, the French and English, could not foresee the future, they could not foresee that the French-Canadian language and culture would become imperiled. They did not appreciate the regional differences, and the fact that these differences would not disappear. The result was that the regional differences, including the French-Canadian culture, were supposed to submerge themselves under a nebulous Canadian identity, as many Ontarians continue to believe today. It may be argued by French Canadians that the regional cultures for which I speak are different on a merely superficial basis. Indeed, they may point to the solidarity the regions of English Canada have shown in the past, but that's in the past.”

(in St. John's)

“Canadians are regionally oriented, in general and individually oriented, specifically. We are indifferent to the lifestyles and problems of our neighbours in other provinces.”

(in Toronto)

“There can be no question that the strong sense of regionalism is a divisive force and a major obstacle to national unity. That is not to say, however, that strong regions are inconsistent with a more united Canada. They are merely inconsistent with a unified Canada.”

(in Vancouver)

“Federal imperialism is the main problem of Confederation and the west and the east are the colonies.”

(in Edmonton)

“Before we became part of Confederation, Prince Edward Island was indeed industrious. There was all sorts of activity. And that has stopped. And when it stopped we lost a lot of other things. We lost a sense of pride, which I think is extremely important. And unless we are prepared to deal with the economics in this country we will never have any kind of unified situation.”

(in Charlottetown)

“Even today, after 28 years of Confederation, rural Newfoundlanders still consider themselves Newfoundlanders first, Canadians, only after that. For this island was a country, alone, for over 400 years before joining the Canadian Confederation.”

(in St. John's)

“Too often we have heard the expression, coast to coast — from Vancouver to Halifax. I've often wondered if Victoria feels as left out as Newfoundland. The Newfie joke has not enhanced our image. True, Newfoundlanders tell them better than any mainlanders, but then, it is easier to laugh at yourself than to be laughed at.”

(Corner Brook Status of Women Council, in St. John's)

Opinions

Canada is a challenge to geography

"Canadians are regionally oriented," "Canada is truly a country of regions," "a collection of regions," "a country too big to be governed from one political centre." Such statements were often made at the hearings.

Regionalism, an asset

Regionalism, a sense of pride in one's own region, was described as strongly grounded in culture, economics, politics and, particularly, in history. "St. John's was a city when Ottawa was an Indian camping ground," observed a Newfoundlander. "We have lost our sense of pride," regretted many maritimers.

Participants often defined themselves as Newfoundlanders, maritimers, Albertans, northerners or Quebecers "first," Canadians second.

Regions and provinces appeared to be synonymous in the vocabulary of most speakers. Though references were made to the idea of a reorganization of the provinces, maritime or prairie union were rarely recommended.

While the French-English duality was often seen by English-speaking participants at the Task Force hearings as a "divisive force," regionalism was generally looked upon as "an asset." Strong regional loyalties could coexist with, and support, a strong Canadian identity, it was felt. A "united" country did not have to be a uniform one.

Some speakers believed, however, that regionalism could become excessive ("at best parochial, at worst xenophobic," said a citizen in Charlottetown) and lead to "ten solitudes." An Edmonton group declared that a "countervailing principle to that of regionalism" was needed to "strike a balance."

Alienations we hold in common

Economic disparities and the lack of political influence in Ottawa has produced a sense of regional grievance and even of regional alienation, many believed. One speaker called Canada "a collection of distinct regions, each with its own grievances against the federal government and against other regions." Regions are "separated not only by geographic distances but also by dissimilarities in outlook, culture, industrial structures, income and employment opportunities," added another. "We grumble and we wail from coast to coast," observed an English-speaking Quebecer.

Alienation, disenchantment, lack of respect, loss of dignity, political impotence, exploitation, inferiority complex — these were words frequently used to describe conditions in regions other than "central Canada." A Winnipegger suggested that "alienation is the one thing we all hold in common."

A common grievance in the prairies, the north and the Atlantic provinces was a sense of being "left out," "powerlessness," "the lack of control of one's destiny," the incapacity "to create our own future." "We do not want to be mere bystanders," said a typical participant. The exercise of power and the sharing of benefits were judged to be very unevenly distributed. Because of this, some speakers expressed the views that Canada would be in the midst of a crisis "even if Quebec were not different."

Central Canada, particularly Ontario, more particularly Toronto, was seen as the main beneficiary of Confederation. Economic "domination at the centre" was repeatedly and vigorously denounced. Examples given ranged from the location of company headquarters and interest rates on industrial bank loans to railway and maritime freight rates, tariffs on imported manufactured goods and the lower-than-international price of oil. All these were seen as

“It is sufficient to say that western alienation is primarily economic, geographic and psychological. It is economic because we feel that the policies of the federal government penalize the resource-based economies of the western provinces in order to assist the industrial and manufacturing economies of central Canada. . . . Western discontent is geographic for obvious reasons — our distance from the nation's decision-making triangle and the physical and psychological barrier of three mountain ranges combine to make it difficult for us to understand — or even take an interest in — what is happening in the rest of Canada. Finally, our discontent is psychological — we do not feel that either the structure or the operation of some of our national institutions effectively converts western ideas into national policies, and hence we are inclined to withdraw from participation in those institutions.”

(in Vancouver)

“There is a little colonial empire out in the west that needs to be only sucked of its last strength to feed the powers of central Canada.”

(in Calgary)

“Why do we pay tribute to a government 3,000 miles away who exploits our resources, sells us poor goods at inflated prices, charges us for their delivery, taxes us for their benefit and regards us not at all in their decisions — 68 seats for western Canada in the House as opposed to Ontario's 88 and Quebec's 74.”

(Committee for Western Independence, in Vancouver)

“Two things are happening in the west. First, the increasing value of our resources is giving us a new sense of economic power with which to right the historical wrongs . . . Second, our patience is wearing thin. We do not seek confrontation, but the issues central to our legitimate regional aspirations must be dealt with. They are not being dealt with under the federal system as it now appears to function.”

(Alberta branch of the Canadian Bar Association, in Calgary)

“The federal government has failed us to a remarkable degree. It's almost as if the federal ministry responsible for us in the Yukon regards our part of the country as some sort of private freedom within which they can do alone as they best see fit.”

(in Whitehorse)

“Many of the basic rights of Yukoners, as Canadians, are being denied: the right to develop land where, when and how we see fit; the right to control our own resources and even the right to elect the head of our own government are rights which are continually denied by the senior government in this country.”

(in Whitehorse)

“The feelings of alienation on the part of the prairie provinces and the maritimes are as urgent to us as is the question of Quebec separatism to Quebecers.”

(in Regina)

"protected" for central Canada. "We are a tributary to Quebec and Ontario," concluded a Vancouverite. The premier of Saskatchewan described Canada as "a community structured to the disadvantage of western Canadians" who feel like "workers in a company town where Ontario and Quebec own the company store." The acting premier of Manitoba referred to the west's relationship with central Canada as "a quasi colonial one" (see chapter 15 on "Regional economies").

Gifts and disparities

A Nova Scotia group also saw its province as a "feeder station supplying goods and materials" to central Canada. Many maritimers and Newfoundlanders stated that the "gifts" of the "paternalistic" central government were only accentuating regional disparities. "Give us jobs, not cheques," they pleaded, claiming that they were made to "feel like parasites," not "able to make a contribution." Some Newfoundlanders, resented being "the butt of national jokes."

Some northerners described their region as the most economically "exploited" of all, besides being "politically oppressed." A Yukoner observed that "while Quebec appears strongly motivated toward separation, the Yukon is struggling desperately to join Confederation." "The people down south" could not aspire to "plan" the development of northern resources without recognizing that they, the northerners, were the legitimate owners and had a right to share in their administration and benefits.

Quebec was described as "an extreme case of regional grievance." While deploring that Quebecers ("isolated in their alienation, unaware that many of their problems are indeed shared by other Canadians") too often see English Canadians as "look alikes," many speakers in the Atlantic provinces, the west and the north sympathized with and, to a point, envied Quebec. The reasons were varied. Some did so because Quebec has "ways" of getting attention and benefits from Ottawa, they thought; others, particularly in Newfoundland, because French-speaking Quebecers, like themselves, were "exploited." A group in Charlottetown threatened to have their "own quiet revolution."

Over-centralization of cultural life was also described as the prevailing rule. Everything had to go to, and "emanate" from, Toronto and Montreal. "Why did I have to look at the Toronto Maple Leafs on T.V. every Saturday evening for all these years?" asked a British Columbian, encapsulating his disgust.

Political power was seen as "loaded in favour of Quebec and Ontario." "The BNA Act does not recognize nor safeguard Canada's foundation stone — that is regionalism," said a citizen in St. John's. Westerners in particular protested the fact that their increasing contribution to the welfare of the country was not recognized in terms of a greater participation in the political decision-making process. "The costs are beginning to outweigh the benefits," warned one of them.

Out of touch

The House of Commons ("in spite of the presence of elected representatives"), the Senate, the cabinet, government departments, and regulatory agencies were depicted as "out of touch" with regional realities and aspirations. "We do not feel that the structure or the operation of some of our national institutions effectively convert western ideas into national policies," stated a professor in Vancouver. The causes were many: distances, mentalities, party discipline, the system of appointments to federal offices, the electoral system, etc. "The result of a national election is known before the counting of the votes reaches the Ontario-Manitoba border," a westerner lamented (see chapter 18, "Regional representation in the central institutions").

The "centralist mentality," "the insensitivity" of Ottawa-based civil servants to the importance of regionalism, was another popular target. "Feathered in their wall-to-wall broadloom and mahogany" is only one of the many one-liners used from coast to coast to describe the problem. Feather-bedding, duplication, intrusions, etc., were contributing to the strains between regional interests and national institutions.

“We Newfoundlanders are the best equipped to sympathize with French Canadians. For we, too, know what it's like to be poor, despised and exploited in a land which we call our own, but which we don't really control. We even understand Quebec's language problems. While many Québécois feel that they must give up French in order to get ahead, we Newfoundlanders must give up our dialects. We understand the feelings of the Québécois whose French is laughed at in Paris, for our English is laughed at in Toronto — yes, and even in St. John's!”

(in St. John's)

“As maritimers we do not speak as an area of anglo-affluence. We feel, with Quebec, we too have been overlooked, penalized, shortchanged by Confederation.”

(Nova Scotia Teachers' Union, in Halifax)

“We, in Newfoundland, both on the island and on mainland Labrador, feel very strongly that the federal machine is a machine which, unfortunately for us, shows little human concern for its most easterly province. We feel that it is a machine which can only regurgitate that which is fed into it, by those nearest to it, and that therefore it has but one answer to everything — the answer of central Canada.”

(The Canadian Federation of University Women, in St. John's)

“...for the maritimes have a regional identity which is seriously threatened by the existing pressures of the political framework which concentrates economic power, population, and general national attention on central Canada.”

(in Halifax)

“My objections to unity are not only aimed at Quebec, but also at Ontario for the two combined are the power-base of any government and a very effective way to keep the west in a subservient position.”

(in Vancouver)

“I believe that national unity is in jeopardy not only because of Mr. Lévesque and the government, but because of the attitude of the civil servants in Ottawa towards this region and other regions because they have an attitude that Canada starts at Kenora and ends just east of Montreal.”

(in St. John's)

“Gross discrepancies in the standard of living or in government services between one region and another may be fatal obstacles to the growth of any real emotional sense of community.”

(in Ottawa)

“Islanders do not want to be remade in the image of central Canada. . . . They do not want to be dependent upon a paternalistic central government. They want to be able to create their own future.”

(The Federation of PEI Municipalities, in Charlottetown)

“We must alleviate regional and minority alienation by bringing those activities of the central government, that closely affect such regions and minorities, under the control of a regionally dominated, minority-sensitive upper house.”

(in Vancouver)

The Senate also ranked high everywhere the Task Force went, as a target for regionalist assaults. As a house to represent the regions, it was depicted as a "failure." The seat distribution was described in the west and by many ethnic groups elsewhere as "unfair"; the basis of appointment, as a violation of the spirit of federalism.

A paradox seemed to exist in the minds of many people who came to the Task Force hearings: a strong centre gives the regions too small a voice in national policy, but a weak centre is unable to serve the disadvantaged regions (see chapter 17, "The distribution of powers").

“I urge you to seek out ways of improving the sensitivity of the federal government to regional problems and its capacity to deal with them within over-all national programs.”

(in Winnipeg)

“I also believe that a list of knowledgeable northern people, who are certainly experts on the north, should receive priority in the selection to any federal board or commission, as either advisors or at least employees.”

(in Whitehorse)

“Every morning on CBC radio, we have three or four hours, three hours I think, of programming coming out of Ontario which I think only reflects what is going on in central Canada.”

(in St. John's)

“The Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce is prepared to accept political union of the Atlantic provinces, and strongly favours and recommends economic union of these same provinces. Again, jurisdictional squabbles serve no useful purpose.”

(The Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce, in Moncton)

“I suggest that Confederation be restructured on regional units, largely responsible for resource management and economic development activities, and with taxation powers.”

(in Vancouver)

“We must also strike a balance between regionalism and the needs of Canada as a whole . . . we recognize that Canadians' identifications with, and aspirations for, their regions provide many gratifications and offer much promise for the future. However, Canada needs a countervailing principle to that of regionalism. Specifically, regionalism must be balanced by a sense of commitment to Canada which is stronger and more operational than that which exists today.”

(Committee on Canadian Studies, University of Alberta, in Edmonton)

Proposals

The majority of those who spoke to the Task Force on the alienation of regional communities emphasized the need to see regionalism as the bulwark of nationhood. Loyalty to one's country starting with loyalty to one's locality, expanding to embrace the province and the region, and gradually absorbing the concept of country, was a theme frequently invoked. Consequently, in the view of many speakers, "the strength of Canada will grow with the strength of its regions."

There were no majority views, however, on how Canadian institutions and practices could be improved so as to accommodate regional aspirations and realities more satisfactorily, or be translated into constructive forces. Some favoured reforms that would provide for greater regional participation in the national decision-making process, both political and economic. Others emphasized that any realistic response to regional aspirations would need to recognize the growing power of provincial governments. Some called for a greater degree of municipal autonomy. One speaker claimed rather enigmatically that "to stay together, Canadians must be prepared to drift apart."

Candidates for regionalization

The federal institutions and practices that were most often mentioned as candidates for "regionalization" were: the Senate, the Supreme Court, the civil service, the party system, the electoral system, and the regulatory agencies, boards and commissions (see chapter 18, "Regional representation in central institutions").

It was also suggested that public institutions such as the CBC, the National Film Board and the Canada Council should make a greater effort to publicize and support the activities of regions other than Quebec and Ontario. More programming should originate in the east and the west. Others called for an effort by governments and the private sector to establish a greater regional presence in the national cultural life.

Representative bureaucracy

Many of those who condemned the federal public service as insensitive to regional concerns suggested that a greater effort should be made to select senior public servants from all regions of the country and to keep them informed of the regional aspect of questions — "Every top civil servant should have to spend at least two years in each region of Canada," suggested a citizen of St. John's. The expression "representative bureaucracy" was sometimes used. "Regionalizing" recruitment into the federal public service has some drawbacks, it was realized. Chances were great that the recruits from the regions would be absorbed into the "belief systems" of central Canada and would soon lose touch with their home areas. Therefore, a genuine deconcentration of the central government would be a better way of alleviating some of the regional complaints, some speakers thought.

A regrouping of some of the provinces of Canada, "along historical, cultural and geographical boundaries," was suggested by a few participants. The smaller provinces were seen as "giving away their powers to the central government because they are not strong enough to negotiate." Others advised the Task Force that existing provincial boundaries have real meaning to them. Strong provincial identities, they predicted, would frustrate any attempts to redraw the map of Canada. Some citizens of the territories called for provincial status or at least for increased responsible government.

Some of the ideas put forward had nothing to do with formal changes. The Commissioners were often told that Canadians needed to get to know each other, to travel in their own country, to come to appreciate their differences, to develop "cultural norms" and, generally speaking, to feel "a greater sense of national commitment" (see Part II).

Introduction

Traditionally, Canadians have seemed uncertain about their identity, about what aspects of their “collective personality” distinguish them from the inhabitants of other countries.

The very size of the country – its vastly different regions, the disparities of economic wealth from one province to another, the diversity of ethnic origins of the population, the more distinct character of Quebec, the cultural and economic impact of the United States on everyday Canadian life, the effects of having many separate educational systems, particularly with respect to the teaching of Canadian subjects – all seem to combine to frustrate the emergence of a more sharply defined collective mind and soul. Can common denominators be singled out and emphasized, besides economic interest, that would help solve the present unity crisis? Do some already exist? Can diversity itself be a unifying factor? More fundamental still, is a clear-cut “national identity” necessary to Canadian unity?

How do Canadians view themselves and their country today? What are their attitudes to each other? Indeed, how well do they know each other? If not well enough, how is that knowledge, in their view, to be acquired?

In its search for answers to these nebulous questions, the Task Force asked Canadians to express their views generally on the matter of Canadian identity – to indicate to what extent various aspects of their social life contribute to a crystallization of the will to live together. Chapter 8 deals with “Identities and cultures,” chapter 9 with “Education.” “The media” and “Symbols” are tackled respectively in chapters 10 and 11.



Background

Confronted with any major problem — and the Canadian unity problem is no exception — the standard popular recommendation is that "attitudes must change."

Attitudes

An attitude is a "mental position with regard to a fact or state," "a mode of regarding," "an ensemble of judgements which lead to a particular behaviour." Attitudes are formed under a variety of influences: heredity, environment, education, information media, experiences, travel. . . They are changed by the same factors that contributed to their formation but only when other influences and/or reflection intervene. For example, many people travel but not all who do so become more knowledgeable and tolerant in the process.

Individuals have attitudes and so have groups of individuals. As attitudes vary greatly from individual to individual, so do they from group to group. But out of this diversity of attitudes, a sameness, a generic character, a collective mind emerges in a wide group of persons. A collective personality is thus created which marks the group, the country it constitutes and its institutions. In this way, a "national" identity is born.

Canadian identities or identity?

Canadian individual and collective attitudes are quite as varied as those of other populations and of other countries. Only possibly more so! But is there a typical Canadian way of "regarding," a collective Canadian identity? Is there a typical Canadian? What distinguishes Canada from other countries of the world?

Numerous surveys and studies have been dedicated to this question, both by Canadians and foreigners. After observing Canada at close range, an American journalist was prompted to write: "Your very nationality consists of an identity crisis with which you have a national love affair." In his view, the Canadian identity consists of the very habit of searching for one!

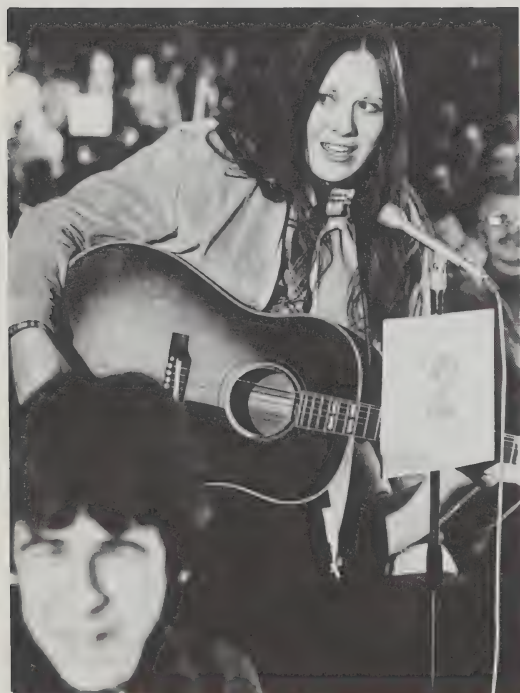
Many writers have had bewilderingly conflicting views of Canada, reflecting, perhaps, the elusive nature of a definitive Canadian personality. On the one hand, we hear "a land of virile seasons, inhabited by populations moral and religious, sober and industrious, virtuous and thrifty, capable and instructed"; "much more than a chain of wheat fields, and gold mines, and pulp-wood forests . . . it is the expression of certain ideas." On the other hand, we hear that Canada is "a bore"; "a second rate country"; "a by-product of the United States"; "moving towards new doubts"; "obsessed . . . with survival"; without the "will to resist its own disintegration."

In 1937, French political scientist, André Siegfried, described "the new Canada" as "the peculiar complexity of a country geographically American, politically British, largely French by its origin, and international because of its economic interests." Paradoxically, many Canadians turn his words around and define themselves and their country in terms of what they are not: not American, not British, not French, but . . . something distinct, something particularly Canadian. Many participants at the hearings attempted to interpret what that "something" was.

A Canadian culture or cultures?

A closely related debate pertains to culture. Is there one or are there many cultures in Canada? In what condition is it, or are they?

First, what is a culture? In day-to-day usage, culture is often considered to be the intellectual and artistic aspect of life in a community or society. There are many signs that cultural life in Canada, in this sense, is flourishing: there is a growing number of artists in all disciplines and some have gained international reputations; attendance at cultural events is relatively high, as is enrolment in a plethora of courses offered by various learning institutions. Governments — central and provincial — provide substantial support for a host of cultural activities and institutions: art galleries, museums, theatre, dance, the fine arts, film-making, libraries and the publishing



industry. But is this contributing to the creation of a Canadian identity and is it bringing the different parts of Canada together? Does it contribute to unity? Should it?

Outside influences — especially from the United States — are very strong. Canadians are constantly exposed to American television programs, films, books and magazines. Two-thirds of the books bought in Canada are sold by foreign companies, only one of four periodicals originates in Canada and three-quarters of all English-language fiction read emanates from foreign authors. And, despite the relatively vibrant state of the Quebec cultural scene, it, too, is exposed to external influences, especially by way of the electronic media. Clearly, Canada cannot insulate itself from the cultures of the outside world, but is too much exposure preventing the development of a better-defined identity? Should it be curtailed, and, if so, how?

Culture has a broader meaning, however, closer to the concept of identity. It adds up to a collective way of thinking, feeling, and doing, a collective way of being. It draws individuals together, supports thought, judgment and action, gives a community its character and personality, differentiates it from other communities and encourages its members to seek common objectives.

Is there a Canadian culture in this sense? The Massey Commission on the Arts (1951) thought there was when it reported: "There are many cultures and cultural communities in Canada. Canada became a national entity because of certain habits of mind and convictions which its people shared and would not surrender . . ." The Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-70), speaking from the same premise ("It is not difficult to accept the proposition that Canada has many cultures") observed that it led to "conflicting concepts . . . of uniculturalism, biculturalism and multiculturalism." Can these concepts be reconciled?

Questions

What are the attitudes, the concerns and the ambitions of Canadians with respect to identity and its relation to national unity? Are these attitudes changing? If so, in what direction?

What is the state of culture in Canada in both the narrow and the broad sense of the term? What does each community and group within Canadian society know of the culture of the others? Should government do more to help a process of cross-fertilization? How does culture contribute to a sense of Canadian identity and unity?

Is there a single Canadian identity? If so, is it strong enough to survive the present unity crisis? Would a clearer national identity mean a stronger Canadian unity, or is this at best a doubtful equation? Are Canadians better off with many identities?

“I am Canadian, for better or for worse.”

(in Halifax)

“If we are going to get bigoted, let's get bigoted about being Canadian.”

(in Winnipeg)

“To find our own national identity we have to look a lot deeper than we have, because right now all we have so far is apathy, and when apathy is the master, we are all slaves.”

(in Vancouver)

“The future of Canada is purely dependent upon the English Canadians' wish to take personal responsibility for keeping this country together. I think that the buck has been passed too often to politicians.”

(in Toronto)

“The fact of the matter is that people known as Canadians identify with their local or regional cultures . . . more than they do with one national umbrella culture. All wishful thinking aside, there is no singular Canadian identity; there is no singular Canadian culture with which to identify.”

(Political Science students, University of New Brunswick, in Moncton)

“... I object to being called anything but Canadian and I object to any Canadian who calls himself anything but Canadian.”

(in Vancouver)

“I am a Canadian. You may call me a pro-Canadian racist or a pro-Canadian bigot. I don't mind. If we think more of integration instead of segregation and separation, we can develop a distinctive race and culture all our own.”

(from Monsox, Alberta)

“Frankly I do enjoy calling myself a Canadian, but if it becomes necessary, if our name itself is taken from us — Canadian, *Canadien*, is our name you know — then I shall call myself a Quebecer; I am a québécois, if you will.”

(in Montreal)

“We have this vast country to overcome, the spaces and the people to bring together.”

(in Vancouver)

“Canada has gotten itself into the position where the average man (that nebulous body that does not appear to exist) has no identification with the country and feels that his input is not worthwhile. This, in part, is due to the fact that government has been moving much faster than has public opinion in many respects.”

(Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, in Charlottetown)

Opinions

"Our short history," said a citizen in Vancouver, "has been a valuable learning experience of great achievement and many growing pains." "Are we going to falter now that we are so close to the great and prosperous country" envisioned by the Fathers of Confederation? Canadians have shown a willingness to compromise, many said, for the continuance of the country. "Canadian society has grown, it is ready for superior feats," commented a New Brunswick citizens' group. Noted an Edmonton resident: "We are at an important crossroads in our history."

From the thousands of comments the Task Force heard or received since its creation, it was obvious that people placed great importance on the choices to be made at this "crossroads." They readily stated their grievances, their worries, their prejudices and their demands, as every section of this report indicates. "That is what you asked us to do, isn't it?" they would say. In the process, they also examined themselves and what it means to be a Canadian 110 years after Confederation.

We are still searching for a definition of our country, for the "elusive Canadian identity," as more than one participant called it. Are we a "country of regions," a "country of minorities," a "multicultural state"? There were many opinions expressed on the nature of the Canadian entity, but they all had one thing in common: diversity . . . diversity of geography, of origin, culture and language, of interests and of problems.

Some aimed at a personal definition, describing themselves in terms of their country of origin (for instance, Canadians, but of Scottish, German, Chinese and Ukrainian heritage, and so on); in terms of language (French, English); by province of residence (Newfoundlander, Quebecer or Québécois, Ontarian, Albertan); by reference to a particular region: northerner, westerner, maritimer. A few only defined themselves in terms of political philosophy – liberal, conservative, social democrat, marxist-leninist.

Quebecers generally saw themselves and "English Canada" in dualistic terms (see chapter 1). They saw the country as having two founding peoples, citing as evidence the "agreement" that had been reached during the negotiations that led to the BNA Act. French-speaking participants in the other provinces, some English-speaking Canadians, and representatives of some ethnic groups agreed with the Quebec concept of duality, stating that "the French" were not a minority but "a founding people."

There were many in English-speaking Canada who denounced English-French duality as a "myth" that has got out of hand, referring specifically to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and the implementation of institutional bilingualism in the federal public service. Even some of those who acknowledged the historical validity of this duality argued that it has lost its significance because of the expanded ethnic and cultural dimensions of Canadian society (and this argument is detailed in other chapters of this report).

Some English speakers praised Quebecers for their "strong sense of identity." "You can't help feeling a little envious," said one, referring to the Quebec bonds of "nation, language and culture." Along with the praise for Quebec came a great deal of resentment, however. For example, a Fredericton high school student wanted to know why the Scottish tradition in the maritimes had to be "sacrificed" while the "French" tradition in Canada was being encouraged.

There were those who disliked any adjunct to the word Canadian, saying that all regional and cultural differences should be of secondary importance. "We must put behind us our ancestry and ethnic background [so as] to become Canadian," said a New Brunswick francophone. "There are," observed another participant, "too many English and French and not enough Canadians."

What we are not

Even if Canadians could not agree on who they are, there were strong views as to who they are not. "We are not a melting pot," was said many times over. Westerners emphasized that they are not

“We’ve done some magnificent things abroad, not just in the two World Wars, but at other times. It seems strange to me that I should have come home from overseas just about in time to discover Canadians looking for Canada in Canada.”

(in Calgary)

“The heritage of one region is inextricably linked to that of another. Separatism cannot erase a history of shared events.”

(Students of Saint John High School, in Moncton)

“... there is little comprehension of problems that may exist between communities separated by two or three thousand miles. Maritimers, for instance, while they may sympathize to an extent, cannot fully comprehend the problems faced by the people in the prairie provinces, just as the difficulties encountered by maritime fishermen or pulp mill workers may be little understood by a Windsor autoworker 1500 miles away.”

(City of Windsor, in Toronto)

“The alienation of our country is part language, part economics, but mostly geography – the west versus the east, the maritimes versus Ontario, and British Columbia versus anybody it can find.”

(in Whitehorse)

“Out here we could not have [survived] and we will not survive without great cooperation between people. The population of our province and our communities is small compared to the other areas of Canada and the world. Our different cultures could not survive and grow without participation from all.”

(Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, in Regina)

“The Canadian federation has grown to include ten provinces, the northern territories and half a continent of multi-racial, multi-cultural people. And still the ghost of Upper and Lower Canada haunts us.”

(in Winnipeg)

“I believe I am now more Canadian than anything else, although I would find it difficult to define what it means spiritually to be a Canadian. Perhaps because my Canadian roots do not go back very far. As long as I continue to reside in English Canada with the personal freedom and protection afforded by the British Crown and the system of common law, I am content.”

(in Vancouver)

“The prairies, cut off from the Ontario agricultural frontier by a thousand miles of Shield country, developed a genuine intermingling of various and numerous ethnic strains, each holding to its ethnic springs, all joyously and vigorously Canadian. This multiculturalism is much better understood and appreciated than is the original basis of Confederation in the west.”

(in Regina)

“The most prevalent problem is the lack of a strong sense of Canadianism. In all of the provinces there is an attachment to regional history rather than to the history of Canada as a whole.”

(in Whitehorse)

the colonies of central Canada any longer; maritimers that they are not "spongers" seeking handouts from the rest of Canada; Quebecers that they are not "second class" citizens, but a "nation" with its own culture and institutions; native peoples that they are not "inferior," but the first peoples in North America and the "true" founders; the ethno-cultural groups other than Anglo-Saxon and French, that they are not just immigrants but major contributors to Canada's development, as "builders," just as important as "founders." In many parts of the country, Canadians of all backgrounds and ages emphasized that they are not American, despite the "massive" and "steady" infusions of American culture into Canada.

Despite our differences — many said because of them — we have managed to achieve "unity in diversity." Canadians do not need a "kind of stereotyped oneness," said a Nova Scotia high school student. A clergyman in Charlottetown said Canadians do not need one national identity "because we have many identities." For some it is the very "lack of trappings" and "overt nationalism" that makes Canada both unique and precious. If only this diversity were accepted and respected, and seen as an asset instead of as a liability, many felt we would "make it."

The difficulty of "discovering ourselves" has posed many problems. Our linguistic, cultural and geographic dividing lines are formidable barriers. "Sadly, the east is separated from the west, the north from the south by much more than mere miles," said one brief. Given our differences, it was nothing short of "remarkable" that we had survived this long as a country. One participant suggested that it was not understanding that had kept us together: "We have survived despite ourselves."

Be that as it may, there were many comments and suggestions concerning how we can continue to live together, as the following pages of this chapter detail. Observed the Métis Association of Alberta: "We have a house to build from stones of many sizes, shapes and colours, but it is up to all of us to find a way to sort them out and cement them together into one house where we can all live."

Canadian culture

"Canada is not a melting pot and the Canadian people not a cultural alloy," wrote a Dartmouth resident to the Task Force. "What we are is an association of distinctly different families, the roots of which extend to every continent on the face of this earth."

Canada is culturally unique, said many participants at the Task Force hearings, but we don't take enough "pride" in the fact, chided a Fredericton business group. "Although Canada has entered her second century, our cultural attributes are still in the process of development," said a group of Ukrainian-Canadians in Regina.

Canadian culture is taking shape within the framework of the francophone-anglophone communities, but there is "no doubt" that the ethno-cultural communities have enriched this process, said many speakers across Canada. Typical remarks: Canada is a "diversity of many unique cultures and ethnic groups"; "a mosaic of cultures"; "our multicultural aspects are our unique strength."

Because it is a "cultural mosaic," Canada should allow its minorities to "develop" and "maintain" their cultures, said high school students in Regina. A La Salle, Quebec, resident agreed when he said: "Let Canadians show themselves to be big enough to welcome the mosaic of cultures, instead of trying to suppress anything that doesn't quite fit."

There were a few, however, who disagreed with the idea of a mosaic. Typical was a Sicilian group who claimed in Toronto that governments "have seen fit to surrender to the demands for programs such as bilingualism, multiculturalism, heritage and many others." The group asserted that it is "quite apparent that some have no desire to become Canadians but prefer to live in their past."

The arts can be a "binding influence," some said, bringing together Canadians of diverse backgrounds and experiences to share artistic events that speak through "colour, poetry, melody and movement" and about things "beyond political nationalism . . ." said a group promoting the arts in Prince Edward Island. The arts give us "another door to open" and are the "principal means

“... Canada is a nation of regions, one of which monopolizes most of the capital, manufacturing, employment and political power, while others suffer the opposite effect.”

(Students' Course Union and Faculty of the Department of Political Science, University of PEI, in Charlottetown)

“We preach unity, understanding and mutual respect, yet we practice the opposite. The crisis now facing Canada is no sudden or chance occurrence ... unless a radical change of heart takes place in English Canada, no solution will be found.”

(in St. John's)

“One of the greatest strengths of this country is the fact that we have so many differences and have thus far been able to get along. Our opportunity to give something to other parts of the world, who are torn apart by smaller disputes than this one, is a golden one. And I think we'd be crazy to let it go by. I am one brother who would be very sad if Quebec felt she had to leave home and I would feel partly to blame.”

(in Toronto)

“As we think of our country as a diversity within a special kind of unity, it is to grapple with the uniqueness of Canada — a uniqueness we continue to discover and are in the process of re-defining.”

(Charlottetown Christian Council, in Charlottetown)

“Unity comes from knowing each other better, from respecting each other's traditions or philosophies, from breaking down barriers which polarize us.”

(in Vancouver)

“A country needs a 'spirit' that holds it together by giving its citizens a sense of sharing something unique. The people may have various personal traditions, cultures and religions, but they must all feel that they are a vital part of Canadian society.”

(in Regina)

“To me, being a Canadian means the right to travel from sea to sea, knowing that I am protected by a single just government, knowing that I will find friendly people no matter where I go in Canada, and knowing that I share the common bond of citizenship with over twenty million others. To you falls the responsibility of asking each Canadian to recognize, respect and understand that we are stronger now united than we can ever be divided.”

(in Halifax)

“We will carry on with our party in that watering hole in Quebec City, sing some songs and tell some jokes and share some laughs and, by example, show other Canadians that whether we are French or English, Russian or Japanese, Italian or Greek Canadians, we, as human beings, are able to share meaningful experiences, have a good time, meet and part as friends. 'Merci beaucoup pour votre attention, bonne chance et vive le Canada.' ”

(Surrey Beaver's Rugby Club, in Vancouver)

of cultural identity," said others. Noted the Canadian Council of the Arts: They are the means for the "articulation of the individual and collective imagination," and can contribute to "mutual respect, widened tolerance and maturity of understanding." While art and culture can sometimes strengthen national unity, "it is not their specific function," noted the Canada Council. If such a function were imposed upon them, it would be "detrimental" to both culture and national unity.

Many in English-speaking Canada spoke of the "uniqueness" of the Québécois culture: "worth preserving"; "it is French Canada that keeps us from tumbling into the American 'melting pot'"; "dynamic culture"; "a distinctive heritage in the rest of Canada has a long way to go to catch up." Noted a teachers' group in Nova Scotia: "Quebec is not the French culture that exists in France. It is the Québécois culture, which is different from any other culture on this or any other continent."

In contrast, some felt that English Canada lacks culture. Said a citizen in Toronto: "We English-speaking Canadians must come to grips with the world culture. We must recognize ourselves for what we are, an almost cultureless society." Most, however, did see English-speaking Canada possessing a cultural identity, or, as many said, "cultural identities."

A plot?

Regional cultural differences are very strong in Canada, many told the Task Force. Particularly in eastern and western Canada, there were calls for "equality of cultural opportunity" and a "recognition of regional cultural differences." "We must not speak to each other from the central base down, but from the regions up."

Is there a centralist Canada "plot" to destroy the cultural vitality of the regions? "In our darker and more alienated moments, it seems almost as if there is," said a Regina resident.

The influence of American culture on Canadian life was cause for some concern at the Task Force hearings. Some felt that the United States influence is so strong that the youth are less sure than their parents and grandparents of their identity. "Children are growing up without knowing their own country; instead they are learning American cultural values from television and have 'no idea about their proud culture'" said a Vancouver resident. The Council of Canadian Filmmakers said that "we live in a country that imports its culture wholesale." In the process, the group contended, "we have destroyed most of the elements that build a nation."

The Canadian Conference of the Arts charged that governments have failed to "compensate and counter present levels of American cultural penetration, to provide adequate support for Canadian artistic expression, and to facilitate Canadian access to Canadian cultural systems." Other charges against "governments" were that they do not create a positive climate between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, nor a climate for communications among the regions.

“No amount of amending the constitution or the introduction of new laws will help to promote unity unless, at the same time, there is a sincere desire on the part of everyone in this country to establish a Canadian identity which, in turn, will lead to Canadian unity.”

(in Winnipeg)

“I am absolutely convinced that if there were a stronger national spirit across Canada, there would be less need for Quebec nationalism and there would be fewer western separatists. I am equally convinced that no such national pride and spirit will ever be generated in a country that is increasingly becoming the world's foremost example of a branch plant colony.”

(in Edmonton)

“We are Canadians first. Cultural and provincial origins are of secondary importance.”

(in Regina)

“You will be pondering the problem of ensuring the survival of 'le fait français' in a unified Canada. . . . Please also ensure that such mechanisms [various institutions] help rather than hinder the survival of cultures and languages that were flourishing here long before either Champlain or Frobisher set foot on what was to become Canada.”

(in Yellowknife)

“Because of the overwhelming dominance by the English language media over culture and communication in North America, special measures are required for the support and protection of the French language and culture.”

(in Montreal)

“Our knowledge of our history and our cultural heritage is simply pathetic. Without this knowledge we will never understand what it means to be Canadian.”

(in St. John's)

“The moment we start identifying ourselves as Canadians, it is necessary to add a hyphen which indicates the language of cultural identity; that is to say, in identifying oneself culturally with the unqualified label 'Canadian', one in fact avoids rather than claims identification.”

(from Yellowknife)

“Rather than debating the existence of a Canadian culture, we should have taught one another and our children about the rich variety of artistic elements that express our identity, regardless of which province we come from.”

(in Moncton)

“English-speaking Canada is undergoing a profound cultural change characterized by an expansion of activity and creativity unparalleled in history; cultural blossoming has flourished despite major obstacles in its path . . . cultural movements display strong regional or local sensitivity and have occurred spontaneously in all parts of Canada; English-speaking Canadians do know who they are.”

(in Montreal)

Proposals

"The basic issue is one of the heart," said a Torontonian. "We do need each other," said a Nova Scotia high school student. "This is the time for generosity," added a westerner. And so it went. A significant number of persons who appeared before the Task Force spoke in emotional and often eloquent terms about their feelings for their country and countrymen. Many times over, they stressed that, more than anything else, Canadians must change their attitudes if this country is to survive.

"We stand together on the edge of a new frontier — the frontier of the 1980s and 1990s," said a participant. It is a "frontier of unknown opportunities and perils — a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats." "We pray we can put it all together."

Said another, "We have this country to overcome, the spaces and the people to bring together." Only through respecting each other's opinions and breaking down the barriers will we succeed. Noted a Sudbury resident: "there are solutions to Canada's problems and it is up to us to find them; a good start is ourselves." Observed another, "Our nation-saving devices are already at hand: justice, tolerance, good will and a concentration on what unites rather than on what divides us."

If knowledge about each other is causing many problems, then Canadians must make efforts to get to know one another better, many participants said. This and "working together should be our prime goal," was a typical proposal. Many suggestions were put before the Task Force, and high on the list was that Canadians should travel more within their country. Many complained that the cost was "too high" and some said the government should help by lowering air fares, by giving an income tax deduction for yearly interprovincial family trips and by encouraging cooperation among all interested parties.

The strengthening of community ties between Canadians was a popular proposal in all parts of the country. It is at the community level first that national unity should flourish, through cultural means such as student exchanges, ethnic festivals and the twinning of cities. A few speakers said that local church organizations should also take a more active part in national unity by emphasizing the "complementary nature" of different cultures and linguistic groups.

Strengthening the relationship between Quebec and English-speaking Canada was on the minds of many who appeared before the Task Force. Proposed were exchanges of students, professors, workers in the same company or the same craft, professionals and performers and artists. Many times over, English speakers proposed that "firm and positive" steps be taken, that an attitude of "appreciation and support" be adopted in the anglophone communities towards Quebec's first language and culture. Said a participant in Charlottetown, "In Expo '67, English-speaking Canadians experienced something of the creative vitality and joie-de-vivre of French Canada. Can we not have more of that all the time?"

Not all were so sympathetic to French Canada's cultural aspirations. French Canadians should forget about "this stupid culture trip," wrote a citizen from British Columbia, adding that it is time that we all started being Canadians "with our own Canadian culture." Others referred to government waste in French immersion programs in Ottawa as "pandering" to Quebec. Funds for French immersion should have been poured into "cultural immersion" so all Canadians could get to know Canada better, observed a participant.

That the government should work "more closely" with Canada's ethnic groups and provide "more financial aid" for multicultural activities, was suggested by various ethnic groups across the country. Several of these groups proposed that a new constitution be written that will enable Canada to proclaim herself the "pluralistic cultural entity that, in fact, she is."

Background

Constitutional jurisdiction

Formal education quite obviously plays an important role in the development of a Canadian identity. Virtually all young Canadians spend at least ten of their formative years in the classroom, learning the basic skills to equip themselves for their adult lives.

Section 93 of the British North America Act states that education is a provincial responsibility. Provinces and territories develop and administer their own education policies, institutions and programs, each of which differs to a greater or lesser extent from one province to another. School administration is controlled by local school boards, the powers and geographical areas of which are delineated by provincial and territorial legislation.

Provision was made in the BNA Act for a central government role in protecting confessional school rights, but it has almost never been used. Today, the central government's role in education is essentially financial, except for the direct responsibilities it has in the cases of schools for Indian and Inuit children, for armed forces personnel abroad and for inmates of federal penitentiaries. It also makes substantial payments to the provinces for post-secondary education. Since 1970, the central government has also been helping the provinces to finance language teaching to the minority official language population of each province. Other federal contributions include those paid under the Adult Occupational Training Act, the Canada Student Loans Act, the Health Resources Fund Act, and in the form of scholarships and research grants to universities.

A Canadian education

Canada does not have any overall, clear-cut and declared national policy or objective for education, a fact deplored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1976. In its report of that year, the OECD stated that "decisions now have to be taken concerning the destination of the Canadian school system within an ordered view of the future of Canada as a nation," and suggested that the Council of Ministers of Education provides a proper forum for discussion in this area. The council already acts as a coordinating mechanism for the establishment of common goals and priorities, among the provinces, in education.

The question of the degree of "Canadian content" in courses at all levels of instruction is central to the issue of identity formation. It appears from various studies on the subject, such as the 1975 Report of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada's Commission on Canadian Studies (known as the Symons Report), that the teaching of Canadian history, geography, literature, the arts and culture, and government "varies in content, time spent, accuracy and objectivity from province to province."

But what do the students themselves want? The Symons Report states: "Our country is an enigma to many Canadians, and there is a growing wish to explore this enigma, especially among the young. This country appears to exist in spite of language, geography and economics, and thoughtful young people are curious to know how such a phenomenon came about and what the chances are of its survival — in fact, whether its survival is even worth the effort that may be required."

The teaching of the two official languages

Opportunities in language education are improving, with all the provinces and the two territories now teaching French as a first or second language at both the elementary and secondary levels. In Quebec, English schools are available for children of English-speaking residents who meet specific government criteria as outlined in the Charter of the French Language, and the teaching of English as a second language is compulsory from grade 5 to the end of high school.

At a meeting in Montreal in February 1978, provincial premiers agreed that "each child of the French-speaking or English-speaking minority is entitled to an education in his or her language in



the primary or secondary schools in each province, wherever numbers warrant." Some provinces have expressed the hope that language rights would be entrenched in the constitution.

Questions

What do Canadians think of their educational system? Do they find it adequate? How good or bad is the content of courses on Canadian subjects? How much, and what, do students learn about their own country and their fellow citizens? Are they learning to speak the second official language? What changes to the curricula should be made?

“If you asked a number of people on the street, a majority of them would not be able to tell you off-hand the names of the ten provinces, the two territories and their respective capital cities. This is due to the fact that the emphasis is not put on studying Canada until the later grades in Canada's school system. Too much time is spent in the lower grades studying other countries, especially the United States.”

(Students of Sir John Franklin High School, in Yellowknife)

“Young people should study more of our history, literature and political system than they do now. If they did, English-speaking citizens might not so often make the mistake of considering French-speaking Canadians on the same basis as immigrants.”

(from Cranbrook, B.C.)

“The whole basis for our argument is to produce students with a Canadian identity and pride in being a Canadian. Too often today the student is brought up learning only his or her local attitudes and traditions.”

(Students of Fredericton High School, in Moncton)

“We have a school system that separates children on linguistic and religious lines from their first day in kindergarten. The resulting lack of interaction brings about fear, mistrust, prejudice and stereotyped images at the adult level, exacerbated by our tendency to live in geographical isolation from each other. Our governments, institutions and even our media help accentuate our divisions and have done little to show or exploit what we have in common.”

(Participation Quebec, in Montreal)

“The difference in concepts of Canadianism inside and outside Quebec is a comparison of the different ways of teaching Canadian history and the different textbooks used. The difference involves much more than . . . language; it means a difference in content and perspective.”

(from Canfield, Ontario)

“I have spoken to a great many groups over the past few years and I have asked them to list examples of cooperation between the French and the English in this country. I have invariably met with mystified silence. I then asked them for examples of conflict and the list never seems to end. One of the reasons for this is that a significant proportion of Canadian history is taught as the history of conflict.”

(in Vancouver)

“Indeed, to be frank, we have been telling lies about one another in the schools. It is simply not possible to do this for several generations and then expect citizens to understand themselves, one another and Canada.”

(in Calgary)

“In our education system today the geography and history courses are regionalized. The people living in eastern Canada learn a lot about Ontario, Quebec, and the maritimes, but little of the west, in geography [courses]. They get a very 'French' view on the little Canadian history they do receive. The people living in western Canada are educated in just the opposite way with a broad look at the prairies and B.C. and a very 'English' look at the minute Canadian history they receive. It is also apparent that neither eastern nor western Canada learns about the north.”

(in Whitehorse)

Opinions

Ironie

A major concern expressed at the hearings was that Canada's youth "lacks" a sufficient knowledge and understanding of their country's historical, social, political and economic facts. Citizens suggested that the Canadian "lack of pride" in their country harks back to the educational system. The "failure" of Canadian education to provide a solid grounding in Canadian studies to its youth is "undeniable," many said. According to the Canada Studies Foundation, the evidence "clearly" indicates that the schools do not help students to meet the need to communicate effectively with others across the "personal, class, regional, linguistic and cultural" barriers of this country. "The Canadian education establishment, personified in government and teacher union bureaucracies, has abdicated its leadership responsibilities," charged the Atlantic Institute of Education. An Edmonton woman said she found it "ironic" that the usefulness of Canadian studies programs are still "so hotly debated among our academics." Would any other country in the world "consider knowledge of itself debatable?" she wondered.

Feeling cheated

Students felt that they had been "cheated" out of a real "Canadian studies" education, specifically in the areas of history, geography and French-Canadian culture. They considered these to be key areas for an understanding of the problems concerning Canadian unity. Better student-exchange programs would help national unity by enabling students to see for themselves other communities in Canada, a number claimed, and would also increase inter-regional and inter-personal understanding and appreciation.

The educational system is much too "regionalized," said many students and parents. It leads to thinking of "province first, country second." It also fosters the "our" and "their" syndrome, observed a Whitehorse resident. Canadians thinking about the west talk about "their oil," "their wheat," "their potash." Canadian studies have tended to over-emphasize regional and provincial concerns and issues some said. Other speakers at the Task Force hearings believed that teachers tend to be too narrow in their approach but, then, they are not entirely at fault because they too have had "few opportunities" to work with people from other regions and cultures. The school boards and the provincial education departments were criticized for being "insensitive" to national needs, concentrating instead on "regional culture and history." Local studies can be culturally enriching and broadening, but in themselves are "unlikely" to encourage the kind of "pan-Canadianism" that is needed in this country, many speakers observed. Some feared that too much regional or provincial concentration can have a very negative effect by reinforcing regional and ethnocentric "prejudices."

There were also many specific expressions of concern about the lack of understanding between the two major linguistic groups in the country. A Montreal citizen said it is "unbelievable and abhorrent" that from one end of the country to the other, only half of Canada's literature is understood or appreciated. Who in Quebec, for example, outside of a "few specialists," had a precise knowledge of English Canada? The same held true for English-speaking Canadians with regard to Quebec. An English-speaking Canadian, with an "average amount of cultural upbringing," knows Sartre or Camus, but is "completely unaware of Gabrielle Roy, Hubert Aquin and André Langevin," said a Montreal speaker. From a group of Calgary students back from a trip to Quebec: "We knew that Quebecers spoke French but we did not realize that in any other way they were different from us."

Painless and natural fact

Some speakers expressed a wide "national interest." Acquisition of both official languages by the next generation would not solve the unity crisis, but "at least" it is one very important way of broadening the Canadian cultural horizon, said some. Others thought that it would lead to greater national unity by making Canada's future adults aware of the linguistic realities of Canada. Canadians could have the "very best" of both worlds if they chose to acquire the knowledge of

“The Québécois really do not feel, in my experience at least, their firm definition as a part of Canada. For me, the students that I have talked to at the grade ten and eleven levels know very little of the rest of Canada and are very self-centred, if you wish. But, at the same time, we in English Canada in our studies know very little about Quebec.”

(in Winnipeg)

“Half the people in this city seem convinced that bilingualism means that their kids are going to have to learn French in order to make a living. That's some kind of a joke in a country where the word 'bilingual' is currently defined as a French Canadian who has to make a living.”

(in Vancouver)

“We wonder at the mental block that afflicts so many French and English Canadians in this country today, with regard to education. They do not feel the need to learn another language. Why should children feel shame when they speak their mother tongue? In Europe, knowing a foreign language makes one proud. This [attitude] is what we need in Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“If I had the desire to learn a second language for business reasons, it would be Italian, secondly, German. Why should I learn to speak French?”

(in Toronto)

“It should be a bilingual country starting with the children from kindergarten. Every child in Canada should be taught English and French and not wait until they are in grade eight or ten; then it is too late, as I know from personal experience. We need a summer school where French children can come to live with English children in the holidays and the reverse for English children, so they can learn one another's culture and respect each other.”

(from Richmond, B.C.)

“We must accept the fact that English is the working language of Canada and the USA. Any other conclusion seems wholly impractical.”

(from Stirling, Ontario)

“Both the English and French-speaking communities of Canada should learn to realize the meaning of a truly bilingual and multicultural country. Emphasis should be placed especially in the schools. This does not imply that students should be forced to learn the French or English language, but instead, to learn to appreciate and respect each and every cultural background that gives this country its unique position in the world.”

(in Toronto)

“Eventually everyone in Canada [will] speak the same language. The human race is heading towards total unity and we can't get away from that fact. We Canadians can take the lead and show the rest of the world how it is done.”

(from Sydney, N.S.)

both languages, some argued. "Bilingual education" is the "only way" to turn bilingualism from the "painful political struggle" it is today into a "painless and natural fact." Many would grow to appreciate that it is a "privilege" to live in a country with two official languages.

There were criticisms about the type, quality and availability of French instruction in the schools, as the following examples illustrate. High school students in Calgary claimed that their French program was "very repetitive" and had "little, if anything, to do with French-Canadian society." A Manitoban proudly stated that his daughter had mastered French "beautifully" but, he deplored, "it is not the French spoken in Quebec, it is the French spoken in France." "I am at a loss to understand the reason for learning French if it doesn't equip our young people to be bilingual in their own country." There were accusations that French is being taught by "teachers who do not know French," and that classroom time devoted to French teaching is "too short." Looking back on his high school French classes, a citizen at the Regina meeting recalled that they were a "joke." "We rarely understood what we were mouthing, so it became a chore." Many deplored the fact that English was often taught in Quebec by French-speaking teachers and vice versa in English Canada. Poor teaching of French does much to "engender ill-will towards Quebec," was a statement made by a few, because the painful learning process can create a permanent negative association with that province.

Why learn French?

Some participants thought it important to carry a bilingual education beyond high school and into the universities. A few believed that no Canadian university should be allowed to confer degrees unless a student could show a "working knowledge" of both official languages. Some also thought that proficiency in both French and English should be a prerequisite to university entrance. There were a few critics of the way French is taught at the university level in English Canada. Some said not enough emphasis was placed on its importance to Canadian society as a whole. Observed a Newfoundlander: university French departments have an attitude of "linguistic snobbery" with "their faces turned toward France and their behinds toward Quebec."

Other arguments were made: Canadian children must be given every opportunity to grow into responsible adults and future leaders; being bilingual is one of the prerequisites of a successful career; job opportunities will be enhanced, both in the public and private sectors, at home and abroad. The earlier a second language is learned, the better, said some, because the "younger we are" the fewer the chances of "carrying the burden" of prejudices imposed by the environment. Many students also felt that it was very important to have "the choice of going" to either a French or English-speaking school.

Counter arguments usually rested on considerations of cost ("bilingualism is expensive") and practicality ("English is the language of the western world" . . . "of Canada" . . . "of North America" . . . "of the world" . . . "Why learn French?"). Bilingualism, some said, is "divisive"; therefore, why encourage divisiveness in the school system? Some English participants felt that Quebec is becoming a unilingual province while the rest of Canada is being "forced" into bilingualism, as this letter from Rumsey (Alberta) indicates: "Recently, we have been informed French will be taught in the schools in grade one in our English-speaking provinces. Does the same apply to grade one [children] in Quebec? Will they learn English? I very much doubt it."

Most students and their parents preferred to leave education in provincial hands with the central government providing financial assistance, especially in the area of second-language instruction. The main reasons: physical proximity ensures better administration, according to some, and provincial control encourages "regional perspective and culture, according to others."

A federal responsibility

But some English-speaking students and parents said that education should be a federal responsibility, that all programs should be "standardized" and uniform. They felt that this would help those who move from one province to another (eliminating "controversy over what grade you need for a certain job"). Further advantages were claimed for federal control: education would be

“We are convinced that on the question of the teaching of both official languages the government would not only have the support of the Italian community but of all Canadians of European origin. We are making this recommendation to prove to our Quebec compatriots that we believe in our right to protect Canada and also because we firmly believe that knowing another language increases understanding, develops tolerance and sometimes furthers one's success in life.”

(in Montreal)

“The study of languages is good for the mind. French is good for you even if you happen to be living in Peking. If you have the additional good fortune to live in Canada — with ready access to French newspapers and books, radio and television, and where 30 per cent of the country's citizens speak the language as their first tongue — so much the better. It makes such good sense. One wonders why some think it is a controversial proposition.”

(Canadian Parents for French, in Ottawa)

“Canada will have reached the age of maturity when the two official languages take their rightful place and Canadians should not lose time in acquainting themselves with the advantage of another language, an advantage not extended in the past.”

(from Moncton)

“The second language — be it English or French — should be taught as a compulsory subject (but not the language of instruction) starting with the lowest elementary grades.”

(Regina Chamber of Commerce, in Regina)

“It seems to me that one way to preserve the unity of Canada is to have all the schools teach both English and French from kindergarten through grade thirteen.”

(from Windsor, Ontario)

“In Canada it is equally imperative that people of English origin should learn French, just as the latter should learn the English language.”

(from Bathurst, New Brunswick)

“I would like to see the French language used extensively in grade one, when learning languages is easiest. I would like to see a majority of children bilingual. This would avoid increasing our domestic differences and provide a new educational benefit. I have a hunch, as well, that children growing up able to speak French will be more tolerant and appreciative of Canada's cultural differences.”

(in Winnipeg)

“English-speaking children, certainly, come up through the schools without learning anything about the historic achievements of French culture and civilization. Moreover, they do not learn how much of their own English-speaking culture and civilization has been borrowed from the French. The two cultures have, in fact, been borrowing back and forth from one other for centuries.”

(in Halifax)

“The very idea of our highest-earned degree being given to Canadians who do not know our two languages continues to disturb me.”

(from Ottawa)

better financed, Canadian textbook marketing would be uniform, and a central government could make Canadian studies compulsory instead of optional as they now are in some provinces.

A group of students in Ottawa proposed making federal financial assistance to post-secondary education, including tuition fees, student loan programs and federal-provincial funding, more uniform across the country to avoid situations where "students from the poorest provinces pay the highest cost."

Native peoples

Some native groups told the Task Force that they had been denied the right to speak their own languages in school. Indian children who spoke their own languages were sometimes punished for doing so. As a result of adopting English throughout the educational system, the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood said that the Indian languages have been "wiped out" in the younger generations.

Other groups charged that Indian studies have been ignored in the schools, leaving Canadians with little or no knowledge of native peoples' history, and culture. As a result, many people have a narrow, bigoted view of this country's "first citizens." (For a more detailed look at native peoples, see chapter 3.)

“A further point which creates tensions working against Canadian unity, in a society where the mobility of people is constantly increasing, is that there is no common basic educational curriculum in Canada. We urge the Task Force, in its recommendations, to ask the Council of Education Ministers to recognize that the establishment of some common minimum educational standards across Canada, for the various grade levels, be a matter of priority.”

(Catholic School Trustees Association of British Columbia, in Vancouver)

“Education is a matter of national concern and it is necessary that the involvement in education of the various departments of the federal government be coordinated. Also, there are areas where more federal involvement is necessary and desirable — language instruction and education financing are two of them.”

(The Manitoba Teachers' Society, in Winnipeg)

“Although the provinces should be responsible for education generally, the federal government should be responsible for language rights and historical accuracy across the nation.”

(from Ste. Anne, Manitoba)

“Once we have a truly bilingual country, communication will be possible. To achieve this, French education must begin in the first grade. This is another factor in support of a nationalized education system.”

(Students of Sir John Franklin High School, in Yellowknife)

“Federal responsibility should be demonstrated by bringing French language teaching into the school system. This teaching should begin with pre-schoolers and continue through grade twelve. This must become a federal responsibility if it is to have any success at all. Familiarity with the language, we hold, is a prerequisite for empathy with the francophones and their culture.”

(Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, in Calgary)

“We feel that the federal government does not have, and should not have, jurisdiction in the educational offerings of the schools of the country. This includes the teaching of languages.”

(St. Nicholas Roumanian Orthodox Youth, in Regina)

“This problem [bilingualism] could have been resolved . . . if education had been controlled from Ottawa and not provincially. To have our country thinking together, to be speaking two languages (French and English), to be good citizens and proud Canadians — with a high standard of teaching directives emanating from a national board of education . . . this could conceivably accomplish what each province now is not accomplishing.”

(from Victoria)

“It is then clear that bilingualism is not a safeguard to the French language. What we do need is a French educational system established by the federal government so as to ensure the efficiency of the provincial governments. This would demonstrate a positive move for the survival of the young francophones.”

(L'Association jeunesse fransaskoise, in Regina)

Proposals

"If ignorance about ourselves is the problem, then education, leading to understanding, is the solution," said a St. John's resident. Others agreed that the schools are the place to start and they proposed many solutions to the educational system's "inadequacies." Chief among them were: more emphasis on second language training, Canadian studies, more inter-governmental cooperation, more federal funding of various projects and less parochialism in the classrooms of the nation.

The Canada Studies Foundation recommended "national understanding" as an overall goal for Canadian education, but emphasized that what is mainly needed is not more Canadian studies, but "better" Canadian studies.

To coordinate and respond

There were proposals from several educational groups that an autonomous "agency" be established to determine "over-all goals and objectives" in education. Some described this "agency" as a "central clearing house" to collect and disseminate information and materials pertinent to all levels of the education system.

The type and quality of teaching materials available in the schools were questioned by many speakers at the hearings throughout the country. Many saw plenty of room for improvement: more "Canadian" and "higher quality" textbooks on Canada-related subjects were high on the list, along with increased and improved teaching of Canadian history and geography. What "has to be recognized," observed a university spokesman in Toronto, is that "despite the efforts of the past two decades" there is still "inadequate" encouragement and support for the preparation and publication of "good Canadian textbooks and materials" from the elementary to the university level.

There were some calls for the creation of a department of education to "coordinate and expand" activities in education. The majority, however, were content to leave educational matters largely in the hands of the provinces, but saw that greater federal-provincial cooperation would be an asset in certain educational matters, such as curriculum development, education research and the methodology of teaching French or English as a second language. Because Canada has two officially recognized languages, a Halifax resident advocated that their "use and instruction" should be seen as a national rather than a provincial responsibility.

More emphasis should be placed in getting French as a second language into the English school system and English into the French system. This proposal was heard hundreds of times throughout the Task Force tour of fifteen cities.

The central government was urged to act immediately by redirecting funds now spent on civil service language training to the provinces for bolstering second language training in the schools. The Alliance for Bilingualism in Ottawa urged the central government also to continue to "assert" the importance of both official languages and encourage all provinces to make second language instruction a part of the standard curriculum.

A speaker in Toronto urged the creation of educational curricula to give families a "choice"; one would be education in the majority language of the province and the other would be geared to the development of "bilingual fluency." Only in this way, he said, will bilingualism be seen as an opportunity rather than the "unsaleable" program it is now.

Widen the scope

Some high school students in the west, who maintained that the French program has "little" to do with Canadian society, suggested that the teaching of French be revised to reflect "largely" or "totally" French Canadian language and culture.

Constitutional change in educational matters was suggested by the Association française des

“The Canadian tradition of local management, rigid provincial autonomy and mixed attitudes towards national needs has contributed to a lack of a national policy, goals and coordination in educational affairs.”

(B.C. Teachers Federation, in Vancouver)

“National unity could be further promoted by increased funding towards educational travel within Canada, by developing a program of year-long regional student exchanges, and by the continued promotion of the arts and culture in Canada.”

(Students of Saint John High School, in Moncton)

“Money spent on English-French exchange programs isn't going to maintain unity.”

(Association of Franco-Ontarian Youth, in Toronto)

“To become more aware of the different cultures, more exchange programs should be used. This would increase students' inclination to get to other areas of Canada and learn the economic, social and cultural differences of the provinces.”

(Central Collegiate Students, in Regina)

“I would urge the federal government to act immediately in encouraging and financing student exchange programs on a large and thoroughly committed scale. This should be done with a view to creating an awareness of what diversity does exist in Canada so that my generation, both French and English, will be adequately prepared to take on the task of keeping Canada together, not because we will have been instilled with a sense of duty and blind allegiance, but because we will have experienced the vitality of unity.”

(in Halifax)

“The interprovincial student exchange programs which presently are not academically credited, should be credited and integrated into the provincial systems. Every student should, at some time during their school years, study in a different part of Canada. This opinion is based on experience with the Forum and on the Hospitality Canada Program of the Secretary of State. We are greatly in favour of student exchange programs, and of the Forum for Young Canadians in particular.”

(Forum Association of New Brunswick, in Moncton)

“The Canadian School Trustees' Association also believes that an understanding and appreciation of the cultures represented by both official languages is an essential prerequisite to the success of a teaching and learning process and supports increased emphasis on programs to enable the youth of the country to learn more about one another through frequent and regular exchange of students and teachers.”

(Canadian School Trustees' Association, in Ottawa)

“More opportunities must be created for families and children to exchange visits. Open House Canada-Hospitalité provides an excellent opportunity, but more people need to know of its existence. We would like to see more reasonable air, rail and bus fares, so that Canadians of all ages could learn about each other. Involve everyone! Pre-schoolers, adolescents, parents, grandparents, especially those who are studying the other official language.”

(Canadian Parents for French, B.C. chapter, in Vancouver)

conseils scolaires of Ontario. The group proposed entrenchment of the principle requiring the English-speaking provinces to provide a French education in the school closest to the francophone community being served.

Some suggested greater use of television, radio, films and publications in the classroom in order to expose students to programs and information that would "stimulate" their interests, "widen their scope" and give them "a sense of identity" with the rest of Canada. There was a proposal from some Toronto educators that the National Film Board "recognize a responsibility" to produce educational materials for students, in addition to its mandate to produce films for the general public. The films would be designed to help students see and feel the "character" and diversity of Canada and Canadians.

There were calls for greater interprovincial cooperation in the area of teacher mobility and "acceptable accreditation" that would apply all over Canada. Also recommended were exchanges between provinces to help teachers see beyond the confines of a particular region. Teachers should be required to take a Canadian studies program during their training period, a few said. Symposia should be designed to keep teachers abreast of Canadian studies and of up-to-date materials.

Indian and Inuit representatives who said that their languages are being "wiped out," urged that there be changes in the educational system to take into account the fact that there are in this country "cultural groups" other than the English and the French.

Some ethnic groups in western Canada proposed that federal assistance be made available for the teaching of their languages where demand based on population makes it feasible. The Black Educators Association in Halifax, among others, proposed that "demeaning" and "derogatory" references to minorities be removed from school textbooks and replaced by a greater emphasis on the contributions of minority cultures to Canada.



Background

Canadians make extensive use of the media as a source of information and recreation. According to a study on Canadians' leisure activities, conducted in 1975 by the Department of the Secretary of State, over 80 per cent of the population spends as much as four hours per day "receiving messages" through the print or telecommunications media.

Media coverage has grown rapidly in the last fifty years, so that Canadians can now select their information from the following sources: 60 private and 60 CBC and affiliated TV stations; a total of 228 daily newspapers; over 500 community, ethnic and weekly newspapers; 411 private French and English AM and FM radio stations; and 55 CBC English and French AM and FM radio stations.

Public responsibility of the media

The media in Canada, in all forms, enjoy extensive editorial freedom. However, the rapid growth of radio and television, and the government's realization that the enormous power of these media could significantly affect the national purpose, have led to the establishment of government guidelines on the quality and quantity of broadcasting.

The 1968 Broadcasting Act calls upon all broadcasters to provide a service that helps "safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada . . ." and that uses "predominantly Canadian creative and other sources." The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, a public corporation providing television and radio services in both official languages, has an even more specific mandate: "to contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity."

The media's role in informing the public is one that has always been hotly debated. Do, should, or can the media report "objectively" on events and opinions? Should information be "a mirror of reality," or should it try to influence the views of the consumer? What, indeed, is "reality?" The journalist's job is not an easy one; he often must become an "instant expert" on complicated issues, then report the information as accurately and objectively as he can, often under the pressure of a deadline.

Canadian content

Canadian media face intense foreign competition, especially from the United States. For example, the proliferation of cable systems has now made it possible for most Canadian homes to receive the full broadcast schedules of the major American networks. Traditionally, Canadians have demanded access to American programming, and Canadian broadcasters, in order to preserve and improve their audience ratings, continue to offer a wide range of United States-produced programs, but stations are obliged by government regulations to allocate a major percentage of their broadcasting time to Canadian productions.

Jurisdiction over telecommunications

Another media-related topic of debate in contemporary Canada is that of jurisdiction, especially over cable and other forms of electronic communications. Central government control of these matters, exercised through the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission and the Canadian Transportation Commission, is contested by a number of provinces, particularly — but not solely — by Quebec. The provinces' quest for greater autonomy in this field is based on cultural and financial considerations and is one of the items on the current agenda of federal-provincial discussions.

Questions

What does the Canadian public think of the media as contributors to Canadian identity and unity? What is the response of the media people themselves? Do they accept a responsibility to reflect and to enrich the Canadian identity and to contribute to national unity?

“If it was not for the very few real public service enquiry programs, the media’s influence could be classed as almost wholly negative as far as educating and informing the public on really serious and important affairs.”

(from Wininpeg)

“We create ever-proliferating lines of communication running north and south and wonder why our lines of identity do not run east and west. We allow our subconscious American culture to dominate ourselves and our channels and wonder why our indigenous culture is self-conscious and often immature.”

(Council of Canadian Filmmakers, in Ottawa)

“The fostering of a better understanding of Canada should be the primary responsibility of the federal government. A major tool in carrying out that task is obviously the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which has conspicuously failed to discharge this area of its mandate.”

(Corporation of the City of London, in Toronto)

“Our media often express a limited outlook. We are therefore not aware of the real issues in different areas of the country.”

(Impact Quebec, in Montreal)

“First, as an example of a Canadian success, I wanted to mention Radio-Canada and the CBC. For here we have an organization that perfectly represents our cultural duality, a double-headed organization. I think that all Canadians can identify very easily with the CBC or Radio-Canada. I believe that it is a success, from the point of view of Canada.”

(in Quebec City)

“The media are American influenced and ‘central Canada’ oriented. This is particularly true of television and, to a lesser extent, of newspapers.”

(in Moncton)

“It would be dangerous for the communications system to become a strong proponent of any specific point of view. Since the issue under discussion is primarily the future of Quebec, it would be reckless and counter-productive for the message carrier to concentrate solely on one message even if this message were crystal clear, which, of course, it isn’t.”

(Canadian Association of Broadcasters, in Ottawa)

“In this debate on Canadian unity, it is clear that the media must be able to express themselves freely. Not only must they be at liberty to transmit all opinions, but they must also be able to express their own. By the same token, all citizens and all the organizations which represent them and speak for them must be recognized as having the right to their different philosophies and partisan views.”

(*La Presse*, in Ottawa)

“Perhaps our organization, as an association, has not done enough in dealing with the issue of unity. We may not have been as aware as we should have been of how much this issue depended on the involvement of the smaller newspapers. . . . The issue of national unity has been tied so closely to bilingualism that it becomes a hotter issue, a delicate issue, one that is much harder to handle and to comment on without sometimes being carried away.”

(Canadian Community Newspapers’ Association, in Ottawa)

Opinions

What the media tell us

For the country's media there were scant words of praise at the Task Force hearings. The media in general, and the CBC in particular, were criticized in all parts of the country for emphasizing the "dramatic and the trivial," for "making mountains out of molehills," for "sensationalizing," for "divisive, destructive, warped viewpoints" and "disclosure for disclosure's sake." It is small wonder, said some speakers, that Canadians see each other in terms of "clichés and stereotypes." The media paints these images. Commented a Charlottetown citizen: "We must be willing to listen to Canadians both English and French" to find out what they are really trying to say and "not what the media tell us."

The media have a duty to promote unity, said many, but have failed to do so. A correspondent from Neepawa, Manitoba, said that television interviewers and politicians are guilty of the same thing: "they speak before thinking." The power of the press is "immense," said some, and should be used to "keep Canada united" and to "boost" unity. Many felt that the media must show a commitment to unity and report on it in a fairer and more extensive and responsible manner. Asked a student from l'Université de Montréal: How can we ensure unity when at least twice a week football and baseball games between "two American teams" take all the Canadian airtime?

While there was much criticism of the media's performance in general at the Task Force hearings, the CBC received the brunt of it. To call it a national network, said a women's group in Newfoundland, is a "farce." It was said to be "failing miserably" in its national unity mandate, and "conspicuously failing" in its responsibility to foster "better understanding" between communities.

Responsibility of the media

Many spokesmen for the media denied that they have a "duty" to promote unity. It is not the media's job to "support anything" in its newscasts, said a Newfoundland broadcaster. It is a "scary" idea to "load national survival on the backs of broadcasters," said a representative of the Association of Broadcasters. The media's job is to present "objective, accurate reports." The "paramount responsibility" of a news organization is to "report the news," said the editor of a Toronto paper. And to report the news means to give citizens, as impartially as possible, the information they require if they are to "make intelligently" the most crucial decision that "has ever faced the Canadian people."

Most media spokesmen said that their job is to act "as a mirror," reflecting back what they find in society. Society may not like what it sees, but "shooting the messenger is the easy way out." "After the funeral," the problem of the message is still there. An administrator of a Montreal paper said: "Let's not forget that, at the end of the road, it is the public and the public alone, which will decide if Canada will continue to exist or not." The media can only offer their "channels of communications," and that they do.

The board of directors of the CBC stated in its brief that the CBC's current affairs programming "must reflect and interpret Canada" as a nation, the "tensions" in our society, and the "arguments" for changes in the political and constitutional arrangements designed to reduce these tensions. It is not for the CBC, however, to "suppress any particular point of view," even if it is an argument "against nationhood." In its newscasts, the CBC's aim is to report the news of the day with "accuracy, fairness, objectivity and balance."

Some participants said they realized that "objectivity" in the purest sense of the word does not exist. Journalists, observed one of them, are "no more objective" than the average citizen, "and no less so." They are ordinary human beings subject to frailties, frustrations and prejudices. They are entitled to make mistakes and the public is entitled to judge them. Often they know only a particular region or province of the country and "few" are bilingual. It was generally agreed that "fairness," rather than objectivity, was a better way to define the responsibility of the media.

“For a news organization this is the paramount responsibility — to inform its readers. But as a corporate citizen with unusual facilities for gathering and assessing information, it also has another duty; this is to offer what leadership it can by expressing editorially its own view of the issues.”

(The Toronto Star, in Ottawa)

“Because of the constraints put on him by his work, no journalist can pretend to be perfectly objective. Journalists and the media must, however, be absolutely honest Honesty must be the primary characteristic of public affairs broadcasts, of news and commentaries.”

(Télémedia Communications Ltée, in Ottawa)

“When the survival of a nation is at stake at the time of a major constitutional crisis, it is only normal that the role of the media be questioned, since this is often the only permanent source of information available to the average citizen. Here, without any doubt, lies the fundamental responsibility of the journalist.”

(Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, in Ottawa)

“The role of the CBC in its current affairs programming is to inform Canadians about the issues they confront, so as to assist them in deciding upon their future, for the decision will be theirs. The exercise of this responsibility calls both for identifying and exploring the issues confronting Canadians, fairly and thoroughly, comprehensively and accurately, and for reflecting differing views about these issues, fully and fairly, and in a balanced manner.”

(Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in Ottawa)

“It is not our job to support anything in the newscasts. It is our responsibility to present objective, accurate reports of what’s happening.”

(in St. John’s)

“We must try to understand each other and emphasize our common interests rather than those things which divide us. We must be willing to listen to what Canadians, both French and English, are really trying to express in their hearts, not what the media is trying to tell us.”

(Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teachers’ Federation, in Charlottetown)

“I think this is a good time to mention that part of the problem comes from the media. We never receive accurate coverage of what’s happening in Quebec.”

(in Winnipeg)

“My dear English-speaking countrymen, you are actually kept ignorant of what goes on in Quebec by the news media. A good example of this is that on November 15 you were so ignorant of what was going on in Quebec that you were awestruck and almost in a state of collapse after the victory of the Parti Québécois. You never thought that this was possible because you don’t know what goes on in Quebec.”

(in Montreal)

Two different worlds

There was much criticism of the media's reporting of recent events in Quebec. No wonder that there is a flow of letters-to-the-editor verging on "racist hysteria," commented a Charlottetown resident on the media's handling of Quebec news. Said a Montreal francophone: the news media keep anglophone Canadians "ignorant" of what is really going on in Quebec.

Some francophones in Montreal and Quebec City accused the anglophone media in Quebec of being "racist" and "anti-Québécois" and of running a campaign against language legislation. Others said the Montreal media epitomize the "two solitudes." Coverage of events often appears, they said, to be from "two different countries." A good example was the election of the Parti Québécois, which left anglophones "awestruck and almost in a state of collapse."

Canadians were cautioned by some speakers to be wary of the effect that the flow of American attitudes and lifestyles through the media is having upon them. "Some of those" who controlled the content of Canadian broadcasting had adopted American styles to the point where they no longer recognized the "dangers" to the Canadian way of life. Broadcasting has always been carried out in an atmosphere of "intense competition" with the United States. The "proliferation" of cable systems had succeeded in supporting that "seemingly inviolate" Canadian freedom to receive as many American signals as possible. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters asked: "Is this too much freedom?"

Improving services

If the coverage was "more accurate" between the two linguistic groups, the result would be "better understanding," some said. A Halifax professor reported that he and his colleagues were reading French press reports from Montreal and supplying the local anglophone media with information so that "misunderstandings" could be avoided.

There were charges from western and eastern Canada that the media, especially the CBC, support a "central Canada" outlook in their coverage. Said a Newfoundlander: the only things that are "supposed" to keep this "long string of communities together" are the central government and the CBC. Perhaps it is an "absurd" idea, he said, "to expect Ottawa to listen." But that other "umbilical cord," the media, "doesn't do much better." There were complaints that almost all English-language broadcasting originates in Toronto, while nearly all French broadcasting comes out of Montreal. "This is not Canadian broadcasting," said one participant, "this is Ontario and Quebec broadcasting."

Some ethnic groups criticized the CBC for not broadcasting in anything other than the two official languages. Stressed was the fact that broadcasting is "essential" to the cultural development of communities in multicultural Canada. A spokesman for the black community in Halifax said that the media, and the CBC in particular, leave the impression that the only "ethnic" communities in Canada are the "French and the Indians." At least the American cable TV stations provide the chance of seeing a black person, "albeit if only in a stereotyped 'Shaft' image."

“There is a dangerous, anti-democratic nature to much of the federal response to Quebec. We have come dangerously close to a situation where the CBC, a public corporation, must actively propagate the official Liberal [party] line on national unity and government policies, or be labelled subversive. What little objectivity the media presently have is being continuously eroded under the dangerous theory that the media must become salesmen for a unified Canada — as defined by the Trudeau cabinet.”

(Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, in Regina)

“The media should help to make the culture of the francophone minorities better known and should not just put every unfavourable bit of news in the headlines.”

(Centre Culturel Colombien, in Vancouver)

“An island in an anglophone sea, francophones are constantly bombarded by Anglo-American newspapers and television. Madison Avenue brainwashing engulfs them twenty-four hours a day.”

(Essex County French Secondary School Action Committee, in Toronto)

“Let’s challenge the CBC, the National Film Board and our writers to produce factual material.”

(from Vancouver)

“French Canadian communities must develop their communication services. In order to do this, it is necessary that the services of the CBC in French radio and television be adequate both in programming and in broadcast areas so that French Canadian communities can be served in the smaller provinces as well as in the larger ones.”

(La Société des Acadiens de l’Île du Prince-Edouard, in Charlottetown)

“We would like to give the CBC the defence budget and give the military establishment the CBC budget. We believe this would better reflect the true role these institutions play in defending Canada. The military would defend the north with its patrol planes and the CBC would defend the 49th parallel with high quality programming, national heroes, superstars, myths, symbols and a vision of our common purpose.”

(Council of Canadian Filmmakers, in Ottawa)

“National radio and television networks should be doing more to aid in the understanding of Canadians about the circumstances, views and aspirations of other Canadians. The CBC has been seriously cutting and regionalizing programming which would assist in engendering increased understanding amongst Canadians.”

(Manitoba Farm Bureau, in Winnipeg)

“The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation must receive further funding and emphasis to provide better communication among Canadians from coast to coast. We in New Brunswick are inadequately served by our own CBC.”

(Students of Fredericton High School, in Moncton)

Proposals

Many times over, participants at hearings called for more information in the media on Canada's history, culture and current affairs, treated responsibly, from a "more informative approach" to Canadian issues, as students put it at the Regina session. Others asked the media to strive for more "accurate" and "unbiased" news reports.

From English-speaking Canada came many requests for greater coverage of French-Canadian (particularly Quebec) events. Proposals were for "less biased" news from Quebec and a greater exchange of information between English-speaking and French-speaking Canada. A few suggested that producers of news and public affairs programs in both the French and English CBC networks should meet frequently, and even exchange personnel from time to time.

Canada's multicultural character should be stressed through the media, both "private and the CBC," representatives of various ethnic groups told the Task Force. A proposal common to many was that the media should assume more responsibility for developing programs reflecting the country's "multi-cultural realities."

With strong regional protests that the media's coverage is too concentrated in central Canada, came proposals that the CBC should decentralize so as to deal more effectively with regional concerns. Noted a brief from a university telecommunications research group in Vancouver: "The argument, in broad terms, ought to be between national objectives on one hand, and regional or local priorities on the other." There were a few calls for greater "provincial or regional" representation on federal regulatory agencies concerned with communications.

Acadians in New Brunswick felt that the CBC should be given further funding so that greater emphasis could be placed on issues little understood by the Canadian population as a whole. Mentioned were the "tensions" of the Acadian society, the "arguments for political and constitutional changes and arrangements designed to reduce these tensions."

A women's group in Newfoundland recommended the establishment of a "national newspaper," owned and operated by the "people of Canada" and "independent of government." Canadian life in all the provinces and territories would be depicted, and advertising of "national products" would assist in the financing of the project.



Background

A symbol, the dictionary says, is a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing something through association in fact or in thought. Canadian symbols could therefore be said to be the representation, in some encapsulated form, of a concept, or concepts, with which the people of the country can identify, and which in turn represents them.

Canada, in common with most other countries, has some internationally recognized symbols, such as a flag and an anthem, or at least the music of an anthem. Others are linked to the country's political framework: Parliament, the monarchy and the monarch's representative in Canada, the governor general. The first of July, flowers, animals and birds, red-coated mounties, hockey players and other athletes, national holidays . . . all are symbols of this country.

Various efforts have been made in recent years, sometimes with difficulty, to develop these symbols. Prime examples are the debate which eventually led to the adoption of our flag, and present-day efforts to canadianize the monarchy. There was the appointment of the first Canadian to serve as governor general in 1952, and the subsequent custom of having as incumbents of this position, alternately, English and French-speaking Canadians.

Other efforts have been made to create or preserve physical manifestations of Canada and its heritage, a task undertaken by both federal and provincial authorities. Examples include the development of the National Capital Region, national and provincial parks, and historic sites.

Questions

Are these symbols accepted by the majority of Canadians as representing their identity and that of their country? What do they say about them? Are they considered useful in terms of developing Canadian unity?

“Certainly there are those who perceive the Crown as a factor in disunity. I believe this perception to be wrong and that the Crown is being criticized because it is an instrument of unity. Because it is designed to support democracy and federalism, it is a target for those who get impatient with democracy and federalism and seek short cuts to power.”

(in Calgary)

“We feel that a country should be at liberty to develop its own prejudices without having any imposed on it. That’s why we advocate a complete and final break with the English Crown. That may be the only way to instill a bit of national feeling in our English-speaking compatriots.”

(L’Association générale des étudiants du Centre Universitaire St-Louis Maillet d’Edmundston, in Moncton)

“Downgrading the monarchy and discrediting our mounties has caused even more disunity.”

(in Calgary)

“Peoples’ views on the monarchy are likely to hurt Canada because there is division; we need a Canadian-born Queen.”

(in Montreal)

“In order to complete our identity, we must have our own sovereign head of state. We have to detach ourselves from the apron strings of the British monarchy.”

(in Toronto)

“I have great sympathy for the francophones wanting to speak their own language and wanting to keep their own culture because I also want my own language and culture. My English culture includes the monarchy, and I resent it very much when anyone tries to abolish my culture or a part of it.”

(in Vancouver)

“We do need the U.S. In so many ways, they must be considered as our big brothers, but we sure do not need the English monarchy, which is a symbol of colonialism.”

(from Toronto)

“Any attempt to abolish or canadianize the monarchy will be met with deeply-felt opposition by many English Canadians. Yet, if we are to survive as a nation, I am convinced that we must openly disagree with such views and create a constitution which is entirely Canadian in form.”

(in Vancouver)

“How long will the Queen continue to be represented on our stamps or foreign symbols on our flags? Canada has reached adulthood now for more than fifty years. We must do away with emblems originating in foreign countries.”

(in Montreal)

“We have downplayed our traditional institutions to the point of undermining their great potential and true role as sources of national identity, stability and unity. In devaluing our institutions and traditions, we risk demeaning ourselves and our country.”

(in Regina)

Opinions

"What is Canada? Happiness, good schools, homes, flowers, maple leaves, opportunities." To a Charlottetown man, these are the things that symbolize his country. Despite different traditions, cultures, religions and languages, this country's citizens must "feel" Canadian "above all else." "We need symbols," said a Montrealer. Others gave various reasons for the importance of symbols: for "unity," for "national identity," to show "stability," "loyalty" and to acquire a sense of "belonging."

Canadians, some said, have "downplayed" the importance of symbols, and have not recognized their "great potential" for uniting the country and providing the population with an identity "uniquely Canadian." Said a Regina citizen: the school system is the "logical place" to "reawaken" the dream of a united Canada.

Although few spoke specifically about symbols,¹ those who did mentioned the monarchy and the flag as the most important Canadian symbols. Others also included the anthem, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, sports, the Oopik, Quebec's Carnival, totem poles from the Pacific coast, and the coats of arms of the country and the provinces. Others named museums, art galleries, holidays, church and family as symbolic of the important things in their lives.

Extremely divisive

The monarchy received high praise ("the monarchy alone unites us"; "our greatest asset"; "key to unity") from such groups as the Monarchist League of Canada and the Royal Society of Saint George. Needed, they said, are longer and more frequent contacts between the Queen and Canadians; a "more positive" stance by the central government in favour of the monarchy; more use of royal signs; and better teaching in the schools on the role of the monarchy in Canada. It is not a "British Crown"; it is a "Canadian Crown," one citizen reminded the Task Force.

A few expressed fears about "highly publicized" suggestions that a new constitution would abolish or diminish the role of the monarchy in Canada. Should this happen, some warned, it will be "extremely divisive" to Canadian unity. A citizen in Charlottetown said he had "great sympathy" with francophones for wanting to keep their own culture "because I also want my own language and culture." He said part of his English culture is the monarchy "and I resent it very much when anyone tries to abolish my culture or part of it." Some deplored the removal of the Queen's image from Canadian money and stamps; the removal of "royal" from the armed forces; the replacement of "Dominion Day" with "Canada Day" and the use of the "Official Opposition" instead of "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition."

But there were a few at the Task Force hearings who disagreed with the idea of the monarchy as a uniting force in Canada. It is the opposite, they argued, especially for French Canadians who feel "frustrated" by the presence of the Queen as titular head of Canada. English-Canada's "love" of "all things British" has stilted the country's pursuit of its own "identity," said a Torontonian. "The role of the monarchy will have to be abolished or changed in a new constitution," argued a Vancouver citizen, "if this country is to survive as a nation." What is needed is a "Canadian-born" Queen, said another. Instead of talking about Quebec's separation from the rest of Canada, we should be discussing Canada's separation from Britain so that the country could be "sovereign" and "independent," said a Montrealer.

If the English-speaking peoples had set out deliberately to ensure that the present crisis would happen, they could not have done a "more thorough job," noted a western unity group. Since the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the English-speaking community had been oriented in the direction of the "Crown," the British parliamentary system and English culture and traditions. The French-speaking populations had "no such orientation" towards France, whose reigning monarch "abandoned them without reservation" in 1763.

The Canadian flag, despite the acrimony surrounding its birth, is now readily accepted by most Canadians as a national symbol, judging by comments made at the Task Force hearings. But

“Canada is a post-nationalism nation. That's why we don't have parades on July 1st. On July 1st we, each one of us, go off and do our own individual thing — even if it is just to splash on the beach with 5,000 other free Canadians. This country is a place where all kinds of very different people are free to be themselves.”

(Diocesan Church Society, in Charlottetown)

“Perhaps one of the greatest moments of unity was the final game of the 1972 Canada-Soviet Union hockey series. Pride and concern for what many average Canadians considered an important symbol of their heritage was at stake.”

(in Moncton)

“We are proud to be Canadians, though not necessarily in a Dominion Day flag-waving kind of way. . . . The Canada we are proud to be citizens of includes all ten provinces and two territories.”

(from Whitehorse)

there were a few complaints that there are now "too many flags in Canada." There is no need for the Union Jack, the flags of the provinces and the territories, one participant suggested.

A Regina resident alleged that the maple leaf is not even flown at state funerals in Quebec. Instead, the fleur-de-lys is used. The speaker thought this "hard to understand" because the maple leaf was adopted to "accommodate Quebec for the benefit of national unity." An English Quebecer had this comment to make: "Frankly, I feel like the fleur-de-lys is being shoved down my throat."

The perfect number

The floral emblems of the provinces comprise the "most beautiful bouquet in this world," said one participant. This person's emotional pleas were for Canada "as we all know it," with its vast expanse of "rural beauty," "its warm and wonderful" legacy of human resources, native to our founding peoples. "Very many in Quebec and throughout this land, I among them, will indeed weep if a separation occurs to reduce the provinces from their present perfect number of ten."

An Ottawa woman said she felt "very strongly" about the singing of the national anthem, but felt "frequently shocked and saddened" that audiences seem so reluctant to sing the words of "O Canada" at public performances.

"We know we have problems as a nation," said a Regina citizen, "but we demonstrated on our 100th birthday that we could learn so much from each other in all parts of Canada" and everybody worked at being a Canadian. We have "slackened off" in the past decade, so we should look back and learn lessons from what we said and did then.

“It was demonstrated in 1967, our 100th birthday, that we could learn so much from each other in all parts of Canada and everybody worked at being a Canadian. We have slackened off in the past decade and we should look back and learn some lessons from the things that we said and did then.”

(Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, in Regina)

“Canada needs symbols. In fact she has them in Oookpik the owl, in Bonhomme Carnaval, in the Indian totem poles of the Pacific — all these are symbols which spell Canada to those who see them. More splendid than any of these are the coats-of-arms of the provinces and the coat-of-arms of Canada itself. They belong to us all but do we know them well enough? Do we see them sufficiently often? Have you seen a group of Canadians travelling? Have you counted the maple leaf pins, the tiny flags in the lapels?”

(in Montreal)

“Perhaps the time has come to draft a simple affirmation of loyalty to Canada which could be echoed by school children from Newfoundland to British Columbia as they start each day’s work. A country that exists without emotion is poor indeed. Canadians need symbols of their unity which they can respect and for which they may have affection.”

(Regina Board of Education, in Regina)

“‘I pledge allegiance to the flag of Canada, to the great country for which it stands, to the Commonwealth of which we are a part, and that I will at all times faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a true Canadian citizen.’ These words are spoken by all new Canadian immigrants, but I wonder how many Canadians know this pledge and what it means. I venture to say that in Canada today it would be very few.”

(in Regina)

Proposals

To help forge a stronger national identity, the Task Force was urged to make recommendations on how Canadians of different backgrounds can more fully participate in the rich traditions and heritages of Canada, while maintaining the uniqueness of their linguistic, ethnic or regional backgrounds. Canadians were told to address themselves to the greater question of "nationhood" — one country stretching from sea to sea — with all of its peoples sharing a "common allegiance" to the development of a greater Canada.

Those who spoke on the role of the monarchy in Canada often urged Canadians to view the monarchy as a unifying factor in the Canadian diversity. Proposed were more frequent contacts between the monarchy and Canadians, more use of royal symbols and better education in the school system on the role of the monarchy in Canada. A few participants, however, proposed the opposite. A group of French-speaking Moncton high school students suggested that Canada adopt an "independent psychology," especially in respect to Great Britain. Noted a spokesman for the Mouvement réformiste social in Montreal: "From our point of view, so long as we have this British type of constitutional monarchy, there can be no proper meeting ground between Quebecers and other Canadians."

"O Canada, our blessed and cherished land! This union vast, which men of vision planned!" These are the opening words of a new national anthem proposed by a Calgary resident. Commissioners were told that the currently-sung English version, written in 1908, and the French version, written in 1880, although "totally different in subject matter," both reflect the "imperialism and regimentation" of that period.

"Canada lacks unifying symbols and concepts and even its own official national anthem," said students from the Fredericton high school. "Our so-called national anthem has no official status," they said, and they recommended that a competition be held to find a "distinctive Canadian anthem." When a choice has been made, it should be given official status.

Introduction

The reader is already aware of many of the opinions expressed and the proposals made by participants at the Task Force hearings, directly or indirectly pertinent to Quebec. In Part I, "The Communities," members of the two major linguistic groups of Canada, the English and the French, said how they felt about the concept of the "two founding peoples" and the Official Languages Act. The English-speaking community of Quebec described its relationship, past, present and future, with the majority French community of the province and vice versa. Part II, on "The Search for Identity," contained some views from Quebec on education, culture, the media and symbols.

"Economic Life," the subject of Part IV, will discuss Quebec as an economic region with problems of unemployment, "soft" industries and regional disparities. In Part V, "Politics and the Constitution," Quebecers, among others, will speak on such topics as the Canadian constitution, the distribution of powers between the central and the provincial governments, the central political institutions, the protection of fundamental rights, patriation of the constitution and the amendment formula.

There remain, nevertheless, a number of concerns from and about Quebec which warrant treatment in this report.

Chapter 12, *A disaffected province*, presents opinions and suggestions on the "specificity" of Quebec, the reasons behind the discontent of so much of its population, its aspirations, the different political options open to Quebecers and the means available to make the choice — the principle of self-determination and the use of the referendum.

Economics is also a central preoccupation here. What is the state of the Quebec economy? What is the position of French-speaking Quebecers in the provincial business structure? Has Quebec gained or lost, in recent years particularly, from Confederation, in terms of the effects of central government economic policies, programs and expenditures, in terms of its trade with other provinces?

Chapter 13, *The sovereignty-association* option, deals specifically with the possibility of secession by Quebec. Is "sovereignty-association" feasible? Inevitable? What will happen if it is endorsed by the referendum? What would the central government do? What would "the rest of Canada" do? What would be the consequences of secession, in economic, political and social terms? Would the other provinces stay together? Would they fall one by one into the American orbit?



Background

"What does Quebec want?" was a favourite question of English-speaking Canadians throughout the 1960s. Though less often posed in the seventies, it is still in the minds of many.

Quebecers themselves do not always have a ready answer to that question; when they do, it is expressed with many variations. That is not surprising, as the aspirations of any collectivity can seldom be reduced to a general, uniform, simple, definitive set of propositions.

One thing is sure, the "Quebec question" is not new. Conquered in 1759-60, "les Canadiens" (as they called themselves then) and their descendants never accepted the status of a defeated community. They were supported in that position, from the start, by segments of the British and the English-Canadian establishment. Hence the many "accommodations" — called "concessions" by those who resented them — from the Quebec Act (1774) to the Official Languages Act (1969). Confederation (1867) itself was an act of political realism on the part of a majority of the leaders of the two societies and of the four colonies, soon to become seven. The two societies, they argued, could only survive the economic, military and political circumstances of the time by joining together; that could only be done under a federal system, one that would ensure the respect of both unity and diversity. The BNA Act gave back to Quebecers their own political unit, their own "state," and made it possible for them to share in a bigger "state" with the other society and the other political units.

On the desirability of that federal union, French-speaking Quebecers have been divided — then, since and now — into two groups: those who think that the "Canadian experiment" was a mistake from the beginning because the English-speaking Canadians would never really accept the spirit of "partnership"; and those who think that the federation has worked reasonably well though it must be improved to take into account the aspirations of French Quebecers to control their own destiny more fully.

This division has hardly changed for more than a century: on the one hand, the Papineau vision of a form of French state in North America; on the other, the Lafontaine-Cartier vision of a "new political nationality," bringing together two communities and many political entities, united for certain purposes, remaining distinct for others.

The quiet revolution

The question as to which political regime is best suited to Quebec was raised again, most dramatically, in the early sixties. French-speaking Quebecers proceeded then to a reform of nearly everything, from their educational system to the role of the church, from their concept of the state to the position of the French-speaking majority in the economy of their province.

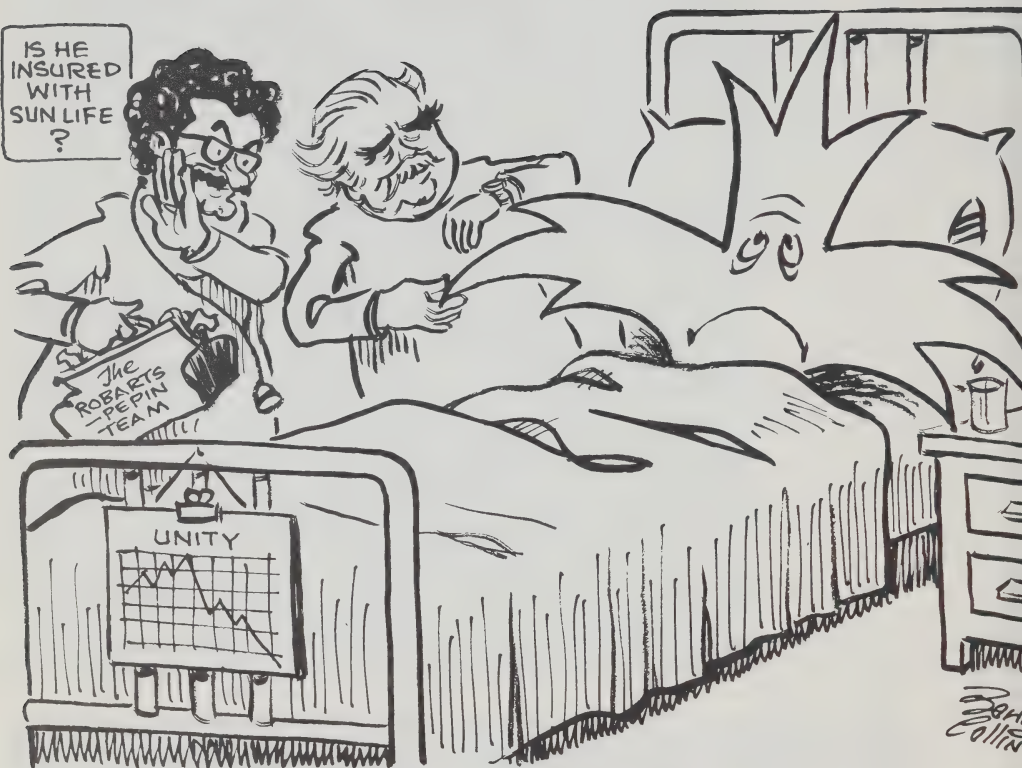
Since then, many political "options" have been and are being debated. Each has its supporters, from the maintenance of the status quo to full independence, by way of a diversity of compromise positions which have received such names as "particular," "special" or "distinct status," "associated states," "cultural sovereignty," "renewed federalism," "souveraineté-association" . . . or "third option."

Also in the sixties, secessionist groups developed, contributing, in 1968, to the formation of the Parti Québécois, under the leadership of Mr. René Lévesque, who had been, a few years earlier, one of the prime movers of the quiet revolution. After a decade in opposition, this party was elected in 1976. It had made two promises: that it would provide good government and that it would offer to all Quebecers, by way of a referendum, the opportunity to choose their political framework for the future.

Questions

What are the causes of Quebec's disaffection? Are they mainly psychological, cultural, economic or political? Why do French-speaking Quebecers find themselves as a group in an inferior position in the economy? Is the situation being corrected?

IS HE
INSURED
WITH
SUN LIFE
?



THE PULSE TAKERS

Has Quebec benefitted from Confederation? To what extent is it now benefitting? Does Quebec need a more decentralized Canadian federation? What economic powers does it need? Would further decentralization be reconcilable with the overall interests of Canada?

Why was the Parti Québécois elected? What do Quebecers, both French and English-speaking, think of the different options open to them?

“From the conquest to the War Measures Act, and including the Louis Riel incident, our history cries for independence. When will you understand how completely absurd your Task Force is?”

(in Montreal)

“This Task Force, the government and the mass media have construed separatism as a first time phenomenon, something precipitated by the péquiste government in Quebec. This is historical nonsense. Ever since the 1759 conquest, the Québécois have always posed the question of equality or independence. Quebec has always been aware of being a partner in an unequal union.”

(Quebec Education and Defence Committee, in Vancouver)

“With the advent of freer thinking, the [lessening] of the importance of religion, . . . the increased opportunities for education, . . . and the world wide [resurgence] of minority groups, the stage in Quebec was set for the rapid burgeoning of an already developed nationalistic spirit. This attitude developed not only from a determination for self-expression, but from a cultural attitude that has existed since the time of the early settlers in Quebec.”

(in Winnipeg)

“Our sense of history should not be so numbed that we think our problems began in Quebec a little more than a year ago. Recent events are mere symptoms of deeper, nation-wide problems that stretch back over several decades. The point now is that we can no longer sweep our frustrations under a blanket of indifference or ignorance.”

(Premier Davis, in Toronto)

“The west has its grievances but national unity is correctly characterized as a Quebec problem, a problem particularly concerning Quebec. We may toy with the idea of separation out here but it is in Quebec that it is being seriously considered.”

(in Edmonton)

“The danger to Canada does not come from nationalism in Quebec, but from the lack of nationalism in Ottawa, among other places. The question before you is not ‘What is wrong with Quebec?’ It is rather, ‘What is wrong with the rest of us?’ The issue is whether English-Canada can separate from the United States before Quebec separation resembles a desperate manning of the lifeboats as the English Canadian sinks quietly, even willingly, into the American ocean.”

(The Council of Canadian Filmmakers, in Toronto)

“In the richest city in Canada, which has gained the most from Confederation, we treat the French language as an alien language. The people who came from Quebec into our city last year — 1.7 million of them — were given no services, travel brochures, telephone books, nothing. How can these people feel that they are part of this country?”

(in Toronto)

“The English-speaking people seem to have forgotten what the French-speaking world has given us — art, literature, a beautiful cuisine, wine, fashions — just to name a few. I can understand why Quebec is just a little upset with the rest of Canada; we don’t recognize what they give us!”

(from Sidney, B.C.)

Opinions

Invited to comment on "what are the causes" and on "what could or should be done to respond to the grievances of Quebecers," speakers expressed a great diversity of views. We have regrouped them under the following themes:

The weight of history

There was an acute awareness at the hearings across Canada of the fact that "the Quebec question" was not new, "not a first-time phenomenon precipitated by the Péquiste government." "The past has caused the conflicts," said a French-speaking Montrealer. Memory was longer for some than for others. The problem has been with us "since the early settlers," since "the battle of the Plains of Abraham," since "Louis Riel," "for several decades," since the "quiet revolution."

But what is the essence of Quebec's "alienation"? A Newfoundlander described it as "a question of regionalism," no different from "the problems" of the west, the Atlantic provinces or the north. A few participants agreed, but most saw a difference. In Vancouver, a professor defined the difference: "The dimension of Quebec alienation is much more significant both in depth and, of course, in urgency." Former Premier Alex Campbell of Prince Edward Island agreed: "Clearly the issue is Quebec." A political scientist observed in Victoria that no other group in Canada feels as strongly as French-speaking Quebecers do about "their existence and lifestyle [being] threatened in their homeland, Quebec." And "it is in Quebec only that a secessionist government intends to effect its own solution," a Winnipegger remarked.

Many speakers tried to explain further why the "refrains of complaint" heard in Quebec are "deeper" than those heard in other parts of Canada. "All aspects of our future are in jeopardy," said a French-speaking Montrealer. His views paralleled those of a citizen in Regina: "In Quebec the grievances are basically cultural and linguistic, with economic overtones." Most speakers emphasized the cultural and linguistic roots of Quebec's alienation. But some, in Quebec and elsewhere, accentuated the "overtones." "To acquire the capacity to participate in the management of modern enterprises, controlled by and at the service of the Quebec collectivity," that is what French-speaking Quebecers want, said le Conseil de la Coopération économique. "Jobs," added the Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, more prosaically. To others, politics was the main cause of the disaffection of many Quebecers for federal Canada. "I have no more confidence in federalism," said one, among many.

Cultural grievances

Efforts were made by participants to define the cultural dimension of the "Quebec problem." Most of them underlined the "uniqueness" of the Québécois and, more generally, the French-Canadian culture. That uniqueness was described by francophone Quebecers in terms of "language," "collectivity," "nationhood," "our own territory," "a need for freedom," etc. For most it was a "feeling" crystalized in a sense of "national community." "Four centuries of history have made Quebec into a nation," said a typical French-speaking Montrealer.

Some French-speaking Quebecers resented the condemnation of their nationalism. "Is it such a crime to be nationalist? How is it that our nationalism is stigmatized as a monstrous ideology? How is it that nationalism is shameful in Quebec but 'a virtue for Canadian anglophones?' " asked someone in Quebec City. Many English-speaking Canadians expressed sympathy. For example, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour approved of nationalism on the basis that it gives a "sense of place . . . and community."

Of that "feeling," of that culture, of its accomplishment, particularly of its recent "maturing," French-speaking Quebecers declared themselves "proud," especially when compared to their traditional "complex of the conquered." Their unwillingness to tolerate "humiliations" was repeatedly stated — "Let's stop begging from English Canada!" But pride generally was accompanied by some anxiety.

"I am afraid of losing my culture"; "my culture is in peril"; "a generation is in danger of being

“Quebec is not just another province. Nor are they just another national group among many in Canada. The French in Canada are a nation, not a spiritual abstraction. They are a definite community, with certain characteristics in common: language, territory, economic life and culture. It is a combination of all of these characteristics that defines a nation.”

(Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, in Regina)

“I’ll tell you how one turns to being a Quebecer after one has for a time thought of himself as a Canadian. At the time of the debate on the flag for Canadian unity, I went into a restaurant in Calgary, Alberta. There were some napkins on the table in front of my son. The napkins had small drawings on them. And they showed a beaver urinating on a frog. Underneath, one could read: ‘This is what the Canadian flag should look like.’ ”

(in Montreal)

“The problem of the Québécois is not that people in Toronto or in Alberta or in Regina speak English; the problem is that their bosses and the supervisors in their factories where they have to make a living don’t speak French.”

(in Regina)

“The French Canadians are denied the full opportunity of enjoying the economy of their area by unfortunate circumstances. Their language, and their priorities, which are part of their culture, tend in North American society to deny to them the positions of responsibility, fulfillment and self-determination to which they feel they are entitled — and to which they, in fact, are entitled. This is not, however, the fault of western Canadians; in fact, many Quebecers’ complaints are echoed in our part of the country.”

(in Calgary)

“Many Quebecers are emotionally involved in the heady intoxication of prideful belief in their cultural and linguistic particularity. Jobs and security though important, do not compete with the sweet wine of liberty, to those who are convinced of the political, cultural and other advantages of separation and independence.”

(from Ste-Anne, Manitoba)

“We will never have a united Canada so long as Quebec is in Confederation. We will never have a united Canada until we have one language. . . . It is time that someone told Quebec to take us as we are or get out.”

(from Toronto)

“In Quebec there is a tremendous new spirit abroad, in the province, and perhaps elsewhere among some French groups. It seems to me this is something that happens very rarely in a nation. . . and I envy the people of Quebec for having this. Regardless of what happens, regardless of what they ultimately decide, it seems to me there is this vigorous spirit which is lacking in the rest of the country.”

(in Vancouver)

“It’s an open secret that the large insurance companies, Canadian as well as British or American, have literally extracted the savings of the small Quebec investors for decades. These savings helped create jobs outside Quebec or were then lent to us at high interest rates. Quebecers have long had to pay the piper.”

(in Montreal)

assimilated," said French-speaking Montrealers. Why? Mainly because, in their opinion, the French-Canadian culture is "not accepted," "not respected," "not treated equally" by and in the rest of Canada. Statements to that effect were generally illustrated by examples of cultural "mistreatment" — in a Canadian embassy abroad, at a restaurant in Calgary, at Toronto airport, everywhere ("I was called a frog from coast to coast," said a war veteran) — and by references to English-Canadian expressions of resentment, such as the "French power" slogan and the behaviour of the English-speaking air traffic controllers in their 1976 strike.

Even more painful to French-speaking Quebecers taking part in the Task Force hearings was their situation in business: "I had to work in English in my own province," while "when General Motors establishes a plant in France, it expects to work in French." The departure of some firms from Quebec because French was to be the language of work was seen as an insult to their cultural rights by many speakers. "It is unwise," and "it hurts," said two of them. "It does harm to national unity," echoed a Torontonian, among others.

Many English-speaking participants expressed regrets for the French Quebecers' feeling of cultural alienation. From Charlottetown to Vancouver, the Task Force heard statements like these: "we have tried to dominate them"; "we treat the French language as an alien language"; "we don't recognize their aspirations"; "we don't make them feel at home"; "it would have been wise to welcome their modernization process." "Why didn't I know that the Quebec people were made to feel like strangers in their own country?" asked a "new Canadian" in Toronto.

Many, like the mayor of Vancouver, wanted to safeguard "the values that French Canadians bring to the fabric of our country." Some even "envied" the French Quebecers' determination to retain their language and culture, "the vigorous spirit which is lacking in the rest of the country," as one said.

Though much less often, opposition to Quebec's cultural aspirations was also strongly stated: "this heavy intoxication of their prideful belief in their cultural and linguistic heritage," this "love of the classics which equipped them very little for business," this "nationalist spirit," this new-found "radicalism," were the very causes of Quebec's problems. By exaggerating the importance of culture and language, "Quebecers tend to deny themselves the positions of responsibility and fulfilment to which they feel they are — and are — entitled," asserted a speaker in Calgary. They build "their own ghettos," concluded a Torontonian.

Economic grievances

"One of the main sources of bitterness in Quebec today is the inadequacy of economic opportunity." The Winnipegger who made that comment was in good company. Indeed, many Canadians, in all regions, repeated to the Commissioners that, in their view, economics was at the root of the Quebec problem and was the key to its resolution.

Provincial federations of labour picked up the theme. In Alberta: "What they [the French Quebecers] want is their fair share of the wealth they produce"; in New Brunswick: "Economic considerations accounted in large part for the election of the pro-separatist Parti Québécois"; in Saskatchewan: The Parti Québécois cannot be accused of causing "things that were happening in the economy anyway."

Many French-speaking Quebecers made the case against Confederation in economic terms. "Quebec is not permitted to plan its own economic destiny," said a Montrealer. Agriculture, transportation, energy, regional disparities were given as examples of the "negative effects" of Confederation on the Quebec economy, effects that were not "hidden by equalization payments." A few speakers observed that the benefits Quebec gains from Confederation were declining because the "Empire of the St. Lawrence" had lost its supremacy. "Why should Quebec stay in Confederation?" asked a Calgarian, after making that observation. A major labour union stated in Toronto: "It will have to be proven that Quebec's people would be better off inside a federal system."

But unemployment, lower incomes and "economic inequality" were the main points brought up

“How can we not understand, deep down, the seductiveness of the independentist adventure? How can we not understand that some may seek alternatives when more than a quarter of the population in such regions as the Gaspé Peninsula, the Lower St-Lawrence or Abitibi are unemployed and must leave their native land to earn a living?”

(NDP Quebec, in Montreal)

“The well-informed businessman can easily see that the Canadian Confederation has not allowed the French Quebecers as a majority to shape their economic future. Nor would a renewed federalism make this possible.”

(Conseil des hommes d'affaires québécois, in Montreal)

“It is evident that Quebec, together with the Atlantic provinces, are the regions most adversely affected by federal indifference, since an average level of unemployment in Canada implies a higher level of unemployment in Quebec and in the Atlantic provinces.”

(in Quebec City)

“Long-term economic decisions have not been very favourable to Quebec. Whether one refers to the national policy on petroleum, to the St. Lawrence Seaway, to the Canada-U.S. auto pact, the federal agriculture policy on feed grains, regional development (DREE), [it is obvious that] these policies have not helped Quebec's industrial sector. On the contrary, they are conceived of in terms of national growth and exacerbate regional disparities.”

(Fédération des syndicats du secteur aluminium, in Montreal)

“In the western provinces, the federal government pays farmers not to grow crops. Compare that with this: the Ottawa government imposes a penalty on Quebec farmers when they produce more than their milk quotas. As a result, they must throw away the milk once their quotas are reached. One should add that cows do keep on giving milk anyway.”

(from Charlesbourg, Quebec)

“The enemy of the Quebec people is the Canadian state as such, with its Quebec fragment under René Lévesque — but what about the national liberation of Quebec? The liberation of the Quebec people will be accomplished only to the extent that it will join forces with the whole of the Canadian working class without any distinction of race, religion or any other distinction one might think of, to destroy, at its foundations, the Canadian state as governed by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and René Lévesque and the lackeys of the rich.”

(in Montreal)

“I lived in Quebec for a number of years during the sixties when the present separatist generation started to voice their complaints. But the central government did not listen then. They regarded them as idiots, radicals, not worthy to be dealt with. Now, in 1977, with a separatist party firmly in control of Quebec, the government is saying that it's the average Canadian who must change his attitude.”

(in St. John's)

both in and outside Quebec as the economic contribution to the unrest in Quebec. "The average rate of unemployment in Canada means a higher rate of unemployment in Quebec and in the maritimes," observed a professor in Quebec City. An Edmontonian thought that "unity means unemployment and low wages for French-speaking people in Quebec. [If you speak only French]," he said, "you are at the bottom of the totem pole economically." An analysis of statistics was made at the Montreal hearings which showed that progress in "the opportunity [for French Quebecers] to participate in the leadership of big Canadian companies" was slow.

Although progress has been more significant in the French-speaking sectors of the Quebec economy, particularly in the cooperative sector, representatives of that sector told the Commissioners in Montreal that this had not been good enough. "As a consequence," said one of them, "Quebecers have gradually come to associate the objective of being master of their economy with the more global one of achieving a greater political autonomy."

Political grievances

In English Canada as well as in Quebec, the causes of Quebec's alienation were presented also in political terms. "Ever since 1759, the Québécois has always asked himself the question of equality or independence," observed a group in Vancouver. "We are not a founding people, we are a conquered nation!" "There cannot be a divorce where there has never been a marriage," said two French-speaking Montrealers, among scores who aired their views on Quebec politics.

The political causes of the Quebec-Canada malaise, argued many participants, reside in English-speaking Canada's refusal to accept the uniqueness of Quebec, in its reluctance to concede that "Quebec will never be like English-speaking Canada," and in its non-acceptance of a "true partnership."

Many French Quebecers were set against the federal system itself. Canadian federalism "impedes the development of a coherent set of policies in Quebec." "Citizens don't understand the federal administrative monster and never know which level of government to approach," said some Montrealers. Others condemned the workings of the federal system, generally described as too centralist (see Part V). A Toronto labour group thought that "it is the role of the federal government which is questioned in Quebec and not national unity." A Vancouverite suggested that if the central government "had been more imaginative and sensitive, much of the Parti Québécois' attractiveness would have disappeared."

Other speakers identified as causes of political discontent specific events ranging from the British conquest of 1759-60 to the conduct of the central government in both the 1970 October crisis — "the army and the federal cops sent to subjugate the Québécois" — and in the "present hysterical campaign for national unity," as two Winnipeggers, among others, put it.

The advent of the Parti Québécois was also cited by some speakers as a factor of disunity. Many, however, praised the Parti Québécois for its dedication to principle, its offering of "an opportunity for personal involvement in a cause greater than the individual," to quote a French-speaking Montrealer. In comparison, "What principle does Canada have?" asked an English-speaking one. Ottawa was wrong "in regarding the péquistes as idiots and radicals," a Newfoundlander in St. John's believed. Said a speaker in Vancouver: "If Ottawa had taken Quebec seriously in the 1960s, there might never have been a Parti Québécois government."

November 15

"Since this damned and fateful November 15th" which saw the election of the P.Q., a "[sense] of trauma has prevented a realistic appreciation of the whole thing," said a citizen in Toronto, as he was sharing with the Commissioners his vision of what lies ahead for Quebec and Canada.

Many French-speaking Quebecers used similarly strong language in explaining to the Task Force why they had voted for the Parti Québécois on November 15, 1976. In Montreal and in Quebec City, Commissioners heard statements such as: "On that day, we gave a powerful boost to our self-esteem, and we are proud of it"; "young Quebecers voted for the Parti Québécois because

“The machinery of federal-provincial relations and an administrative structure involving both duplication and overlap have given rise to heavy and increasing costs, not to mention the frustrations of the common citizen who can no longer understand the simplest thing about this administrative monster and who never knows which level of government to consult about solving his problems.”

(in Quebec City)

“...ever since the industrialized era began in Quebec [and especially since] World War II, all the governments elected by the people of Quebec have met with countless difficulties in trying to establish ... within the confines of the confederative agreement, a coherent set of policies enabling the Quebec government to develop the life of our people in all its spheres of activity.”

(Quebec Cooperative Council, in Montreal)

“The grave injustices and the national oppression to which the French-Canadian nation was subjected are part and parcel of the essence of the colonialist legislation that serves as a constitution for Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“Separatist feelings in Quebec are heightened at this moment by a universal radical movement, one that is essentially of leftist and marxist leanings. During the 60s, especially in Quebec, it met with astounding success among intellectuals, reporters, artists and students, to some extent because of its psychological component which appealed to these people and which may summarily be described as the theme of the oppressed minority.”

(in Vancouver)

“The present astonishment over the ‘resurgence’ of separatism in Quebec is either hypocritical or the expression of an ignorance that is just as dangerous. Now let’s stop hiding our heads in the sand and let us face the problem squarely. In our opinion, that is the first step in attempting to solve a problem of any kind. Let us accept that there is a problem.”

(The French-Canadian Society of Calgary, in Calgary)

“The Quebec electorate spoke, and dismay swept the land!”

(in Dartmouth, N.S.)

“In spite of the very real problems we have, in spite of the actions of the present government of Quebec, in spite of the serious questions concerning the benefits of federalism, one fact is quite clear: the large majority of the Quebec people does not want separatism. We should not act as if it did.”

(in Montreal)

“We invite the French Canadians outside Quebec and the other Canadians not to believe that a majority of Quebecers supports separation.”

(Institut politique de Trois-Rivières, in Montreal)

“Mr. Levesque is a separatist and his party wishes to establish an independent country of Quebec despite the contrary opinions of his own people and the people of Canada. Mr. Levesque’s election to power was achieved mostly through a playing down of the separatist issue.”

(in Toronto)

they wanted to do away with the 110 years of discrimination and frustration that their parents have lived through"; "Quebec has awakened, and that awakening has been spectacular."

Does this mean that the French-speaking Quebecers had voted for independence? More than a few Quebecers said no: "The great majority of Québécois remain federalist," argued a French-speaking one, a view echoed by many, particularly English-speaking, Quebecers. One of them referred to "the general situation in the province" as explaining why 41 per cent of Quebecers, "the majority of whom are not separatist," voted for the Parti Québécois.

Many non-Quebecers, notably Ontarians and westerners, agreed with that assessment of the election of the Parti Québécois. Said one Vancouverite: "Voters were ready for a change in Quebec and most of them didn't like Robert Bourassa." In Calgary, the representative of the Communist party interpreted the 1976 election as "a vote against corruption, government mismanagement and anti-labour policies."

A larger number of participants at the Task Force hearings, however, both in and outside Quebec, believed otherwise: the election of the Parti Québécois was a mandate for the Quebec government to negotiate separation, if not a clear-cut vote for independence. A speaker in St. John's referred to the Parti Québécois as "that separatist party which is firmly in control of Quebec." A French-speaking Montrealer asked the Commissioners not to be misled by the terms independence and souveraineté-association: "Quebecers who voted for the P.Q. did not ignore the constitutional position of Mr. René Lévesque," he warned.

A francophone living in Calgary expressed his annoyance with the debate on the meaning of the Parti Québécois victory. In his view, "One has to be blind not to have noticed that all the governments in Quebec, since Lesage, have made demands which have been more and more souverainistes, indépendantistes, séparatistes. . . or whichever euphemism you prefer."

French-speaking participants outside Quebec followed closely the events of November 1976. In Moncton, some Acadians, even among those who disagreed with the secession of Quebec, spoke of "a barely concealed joy," of "the impetus [provided] to our fight to become masters of our own fate," of an event that "has awakened English-speaking Canadians" and made them aware that "national unity is their problem, not Quebec's." For a francophone in Toronto, the election of the Parti Québécois "was a catalyst which stirred up all the problems with Confederation." Many other francophones outside Quebec told the Task Force that the event had become a symbolic keystone in their own struggle. "We're tired of begging; we want some radical changes," said one of them.

Many participants were not inclined to discuss whether or not November 15 was a separatist victory; other aspects of the party platform and rise to power seemed to them more important. For some, the "popular" or "grassroots" origins of the party was its most interesting feature. This was bound to lead to enlightened social policies, they thought. For this reason, said a Newfoundland labour group: "Many of us were not displeased" by the outcome of the election. A Torontonian asked the Commissioners why no one talks about the "social democratic aspect" of the party's platform and the progressive policies adopted in Quebec since the election. "They could show other provinces how to treat their citizens," he argued.

Few leftist groups joined in such praise. Quebec workers, they repeatedly told the Task Force, should not be fooled by the fraudulent stance on independence of the Parti Québécois, by its "petit bourgeois leadership." The days have not yet come when "the system which exploits the workers will be smashed."

For many French and English-speaking Canadians, the election of the Parti Québécois was a welcome event inasmuch as it compelled Canadians generally to think about the entire political system under which they live. "It was," said a Montrealer, "a healthy prise de conscience of problems that have existed for so long." Said another, "the politicians and the citizens were too complacent" about the Canadian political system. Too many of them had assumed that Canada was strong and united. They have at last started, some participants thought, to ask the right questions about the constitution, the division of power and the fundamental aspirations of all Canadians, Quebecers included.

“It’s obvious they were elected on a mandate for good and responsible government. Yet the PQ wants to use its public office to promote separatism, through a referendum.”

(from Armstrong, B.C.)

“At the last Quebec elections, the French Canadians voted in support of a political party which is truly theirs, a party that acknowledges their struggle and is ready to work for change. In a vigorous way, it has brought to the fore those problems that exist in the Canadian Confederation.”

(in Toronto)

“If November 15, 1976 announced the hour of freedom for many Quebecers, for us it announced the moment of truth. . . .”

(l’Association Canadienne Française de l’Ontario, in Toronto)

“But Quebec is awake now. It was a spectacular awakening, a beautiful awakening. We have stood up and we shall not sit down again for quite a while. Our new government has extraordinarily competent people.”

(in Montreal)

“Isn’t that the secret of Levesque’s success? He has raised in Quebec a standard to which the young people can respond, can respond with enthusiasm and can respond with the blood coursing through their veins.”

(in Vancouver)

“We see so much to commend in the legislative record of the Parti Québécois and so little to applaud from the national government that we are left somewhat confused as to how to respond to the opportunity that the Commission has provided us. It is our belief that the national government has consistently followed the path of disunity in its economic policies.”

(Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, in St. John’s)

“Traumatic as they were in many respects, the Quebec provincial elections of November 15, 1976 have further opened the door of opportunity for progress in building a better Canada. Canadians across the land were shaken out of their complacent and even negative parochialism and have developed a keener awareness of what a privilege it is to be citizens of this country. Politicians have been rising above their narrower interests and have been rallying to the greater cause of saving Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“Separation is a most remote possibility provided that we are willing to make some concessions and some initiatives are taken so that French-speaking people can live a decent life without having to learn English to get along.”

(in Edmonton)

“Ever since Confederation, the other provinces have been making concessions to Quebec, both moneywise and otherwise, and it is time I feel the French are the ones that should be making concessions to the English-speaking majority, by becoming true Canadians and learning the language of the country in which they settled and live, namely English.”

(from Rumsey, Alberta)

Proposals

A Vancouverite proposed to his compatriots: "Let's sit down at the bargaining table and make the Canadian French an offer they cannot refuse." Across the country, participants at the Task Force hearings proposed elements and sometimes the full contents of such an offer, referred to by some as the "third option."

Some focused on linguistic rights, while others dealt with attitudes, travel and other means by which Canadians could get to know each other better across the language barriers. The constitution was the preoccupation of many, while others thought in economic terms. For some, the "offer" had already been made and it was for Quebec to "take it or leave it." For others, it was for "the French" to come up with an "offer." Finally, for many speakers, the bargaining could not start until Quebecers had had the opportunity of determining whether or not they wanted to stay in Canada.

Psychology and attitudes

A great number of persons appearing before the Task Force contended that the solution to the "Quebec problem" or the "Canadian problem" did not lie primarily in institutional, political and economic reforms, but rather in the process of "listening to, understanding and hopefully solving. . . such emotional issues as language and culture." Reflecting these views, a Montrealer urged anglophones and francophones to make "a sincere effort to understand the others' viewpoint." "A country," added another Montrealer, "is a love story, made of mutual understanding and challenges met together." So "let's put an end to vocal inflation, to strategies and counter-strategies, to tactics of all sorts."

A significant number of English-speaking participants agreed. For example, a Torontonians argued that if the country is to remain united, English Canadians "must take a personal responsibility to. . . learn the Quebec situation, to understand the French Canadians." Stephen Lewis, former leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party, reflected this fairly popular view when he declared that the time has come "to describe sympathetically and sensitively the enormous struggle for French Canadian rights." A Torontonians added that it is necessary to help "uproot some age-old concepts of French Canadians as a conquered people"; a Calgarian suggested that English Canadians would have to make "some adjustments in their way of thinking and general attitudes"; others, for example, a resident of Charlottetown, thought that English Canadians would have to "assure" the French Canadians that they are "supportive of their struggle to survive in North America."

Some francophone Quebecers also contended that English-speaking Canadians will not only have to accept the French fact, but also have to develop, in the words of a Montrealer, "a will to favour its expansion in this anglophone mass." Only then could a partnership exist that "will respect our solitudes and our destinies, . . . where values like solidarity and mutual support will have their place."

Language and culture

Had he followed the Task Force across the country, that French-speaking Montrealer might have been pleased to hear statements such as: "Let's treat the Québécois language and culture with dignity"; "let's show respect for the cultural contributions Quebecers make to Canadian life"; "let's promote a 'we care about your culture' campaign." Other statements would have reminded him, however, that "official" bilingualism is far from being universally accepted, that many English-speaking Canadians are annoyed by their compatriots' insistence on remaining French and still believe that the best decision for them would be to become English-speaking. Some of these opinions and proposals have already been recorded in Part I. Here the Task Force reports those proposals on language and culture that were offered specifically as an answer to "the Quebec problem."

The central government's entire analysis of Quebec's needs is wrong, according to an Ontario labour group. "Quebecers could not care less," it said, "whether people in Vancouver had French on their cereal boxes . . . The important thing for them is whether they [can] keep their language

“We in the west must do more to gain an understanding of the needs of Canadians who live in Quebec, if we expect the people of that province to appreciate our needs.”

(Ted Malone, leader of the Liberal party of Saskatchewan, in Regina)

“Whether there is a referendum or not, anglophones will vote for or against Canada according to their hearts. Anglophones, in sufficiently large numbers, must give up their prejudices.”

(in Toronto)

“The rest of the country must accept us as we are; we are no longer expected to mold ourselves in their image.”

(in Montreal)

“It is time, I think, for the political leadership in Ontario to start talking systematically to the people of this province about the realities of Quebec. . . . Time to speak of the psychological truths which flow from linguistic and cultural isolation. Time to explain the evolution of nationalism in Quebec in a way which provides a context rather than a menace. Time to illumine the grave economic problems of many areas of Quebec, and the value of finding solutions.”

(Stephen Lewis, former leader of Ontario New Democratic Party, in Toronto)

“I believe that the French people in Quebec should have the right to choose their own language and culture. There is no reason in the world why they shouldn't have it: there are four million of them in Quebec and there are only 800,000 English-speaking people.”

(in Edmonton)

“...separatism has grown since the adoption of the federal bilingual policy and the passing of the Official Languages Act. In fact one could say that Quebec separatism has grown in spite of it.”

(from Canfield, Ontario)

“When you are in Quebec you talk French; when you are outside Quebec you talk English. I don't know what the big problem is about keeping the country together. It seems to me the only thing that people in Quebec want to do is to talk French, and, likewise, the people in the rest of Canada to talk English, and I think the country is pretty good that way. If you're in Quebec, talk French. If you're in the rest of Canada, talk in English.”

(in Whitehorse)

“This country must revert to its former status as laid down in the BNA Act, an English-speaking country with French allowed in the province of Quebec only.”

(in Toronto)

“There are other countries, such as Switzerland, which are cultural mosaics. There are many others also. Probably, a study of the solutions they have devised, or a study of the results they have achieved, may prove useful in outlining a policy for Canada.”

(Italo-Canadian Cultural Association, in Halifax)

and culture." English speakers outside Quebec often drew the conclusion that the best response to Quebec's cultural aspirations would be to allow the province to become "unilingually French" while the rest of Canada would be "English only."

Support by English speakers, for a unilingual French Quebec was at times stated in strong language: separatism is caused by "a bunch of spoiled anglos in residence" in Quebec; "800 thousand of them, who have been telling the French — 4 million of them — to 'speak white,' " forcing them to become bilingual, because "the bosses could not speak French." It would have been so much "more fair," so "less destructive of Canadian unity," to recognize "the obvious" and let "them speak French and [let] the rest of Canada speak English." Scrap bilingualism, some speakers demanded, "this height of myopic folly," so unrealistic in "a big country such as Canada," and replace that policy by "separate areas of unilingualism," as is done in Switzerland, "where it is working so well."

Many other speakers, both in and out of Quebec, disagreed with that policy of a French-only Quebec and an English-only rest of Canada. They could see neither how "wiping out" English from Quebec would be a wise response to Quebec's cultural grievances, nor, as a citizen in Winnipeg said, "how two wrongs could make a right." Their recommendation — basically that English-speaking Quebecers adjust to the Quebec "realities" — were formulated in statements such as these: "No French-speaking Quebecers should be forced to become bilingual"; "English should cease to occupy the privileged position it has in all aspects of Quebec life"; English Canadians moving to Quebec should accept the idea that "their children be taught in French" and "that, of course, the first language in Quebec should be French."

For many French-speaking Quebecers, however, this was not enough. They told the Commissioners that they wanted to feel at home not only in Quebec but everywhere in Canada. Their adherence to the objective of "coast to coast" bilingualism was expressed in the following way: every French Canadian should be entitled to speak French to his compatriots anywhere in Canada; the two official languages should be respected over the whole territory; all citizens should have the constitutionally guaranteed right (not privilege) of addressing the central government — "which is also ours" — in their own official language.

Many anglophones approved that objective, and some were even willing to go further than the use of official languages. An Ottawa resident wrote to the Task Force that measures should be taken to guarantee that "every Quebecer [be made] to feel that he is a fully equal citizen of Canada, with equal opportunity to compete with his English-speaking compatriots anywhere in Canada." Another correspondent from Toronto spoke of "a trade-off," giving equal recognition to both the Anglo-Canadian and French cultural heritages. Some participants referred to the need for more translations of works of Quebec authors and of greater cultural exchanges between Quebec and the other provinces. Others had in mind a transfer of legislative authority from Ottawa to Quebec in fields related to language and culture. The then leader of the British Columbia Liberal party favoured giving Quebec representatives in a reformed Senate, "an absolute blocking power over measures potentially destructive of francophone cultural or linguistic security."

Economy and business

Although most speakers were willing to accept the idea that the lack of "economic opportunities" has been one of the principal factors behind Quebec's disaffection, not all of them were convinced that the rest of the country was responsible for it or should go out of its way to alleviate the resulting grievances. The unwillingness of some was motivated by arguments such as these: considering the deep-rooted nationalism of French Quebecers, the cost of "buying Quebec into staying in Confederation would be just too high" — "Canada could not afford it," wrote a resident of Regina. In Calgary, a participant told the Commissioners that a lot has already been done to help Quebec, but to no avail: "Look at the billions of dollars channelled into Quebec over the last ten years — they did not prevent the PQ victory."

Other speakers, in the Atlantic region particularly, while sympathetic to Quebec's economic problems, did not see why special economic measures should be taken by the central government since Quebec's situation is "comfortable" compared to what they themselves have to cope with.

“Don't shove the English language down the throats of the people of Quebec, but make it available for them if they wish to learn it.”

(from Winnipeg)

“I approve of the Québécois intention to preserve their culture by taking steps to affect the language spoken in Quebec. In my view all children in Quebec should be educated so as to be fluent in French.”

(from Scarborough, Ontario)

“A question I have about Sun Life is the fact that they must recruit from other provinces, and those recruits don't want their children to learn another language. If the latter is true, then I see no hope for Canada at all. Is the rest of Canada populated with Archie Bunkers that their children are not allowed to learn another language?”

(in Montreal)

“I want all French Canadians, if they so wish, to have the right to speak French in any part of the country.”

(in Quebec City)

“The problem is to make a sufficiently large number of English-speaking Canadians see and accept that an effort has to be made, not necessarily to speak French or even to understand the French Canadians, but to accept, within their hearts that the French language has a significant place and role as a Canadian language.”

(in Toronto)

“Why should the rest of Canada continue to support or help support a Quebec which insists on going it alone, but just doesn't seem able to support itself in Confederation without massive injections of Canadian dollars from the other provinces?”

(from Ottawa)

“For years it was commonplace in Quebec that when a worker went to work he got his orders in English. And, too often, when a Québécois equips himself for promotion, . . . he finds not only that he must work in English but that all the top positions are held by — apparently reserved for — the 'English'; oftentimes, even when he has English he does not get the job — bilingualism does not save him. . . . To the Québécois, all of this means that their being French is not being taken seriously. The Québécois intend to be taken seriously. It is time we 'English' started taking them that way.”

(Ontario Federation of Labour, in Toronto)

“There are progressive anglophone workers who do not take part in the anti-Quebec campaign undertaken here in Quebec by anglophone bosses and media; they appreciate majority rights and understand that French should become the sole language of work in Quebec.”

(in Montreal)

“We urge business to support actively the duality concept in the work place in Quebec, and join a national commitment that Canadians will have access to the official language of their choice.”

(The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, in Toronto)

Quebecers will get what they want anyway, said some Newfoundlanders, as "they have this country in a frenzy, [while we] have no 'clout' when it comes to threatening independence." Some participants argued that the Quebecers created their own problems by tolerating, for so many years, government mismanagement and corruption, by relying so much on their priests and by isolating themselves from the mainstream of economics with their insistence on being French in a world in which business is conducted in English.

Many other speakers countered these arguments saying, as an Edmontonian did, that "separatism is a most remote possibility provided that some economic initiatives are taken." The initiatives most often proposed dealt with the language of work in Quebec and carried a clear message: Quebecers should be entitled to work in Quebec without having to learn English. The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto said it this way: "French must take its place as the primary language of work in Quebec [so] that francophones can more fully discharge the responsibilities of top management in the economic system [and be in a better position] to overcome inequities in the work place." A Quebec City participant was sure that unilingual anglophones would not quarrel with him "on the principle that francophones should not be forced to be bilingual to make a living." His views met the approval of, among others, the leaders of the Ontario Federation of Labour, who said that to deny that right to the Québécois "means that their being French is not being taken seriously" and of an Edmontonian, who said, "We in Alberta would be extremely outraged if we found that people coming from somewhere else would not speak the majority language, and yet we had to speak their language or we could not get ahead."

Also of fundamental importance is the state of the Quebec economy. Poverty and unemployment have nothing to do with "whether one is French or English," said a Vancouverite, a view echoed in Edmonton, Toronto and Montreal. The Commissioners heard repeatedly that the Quebec economy is "very sick," "deteriorating" and "depressed." The solution, according to these speakers, lies in a "new" approach to tackle regional disparities which would encompass various sectoral measures, listed in Chapter 14, under "Regional economies."

Many French-speaking Quebecers, however, were not prepared to rely on the central government's regional development policies to solve their economic problems. Some had lost faith in the federal system ("No federal formula will help Quebec solve its economic problems"), while others argued that the economic policies pursued by Ottawa had often in the past been detrimental to Quebec. ("The net benefit to Quebec is always negative or nil.") These participants recommended a transfer of constitutional and fiscal authority — and the money now allocated to Quebec in federal regional programs, to the Quebec government — so that it could pursue economic policies more adapted to the particular needs of the province.

Some suggestions presented at the Task Force hearings went beyond strictly economic problems. Cooperative action by governments was recommended — "Let's study what governments in Quebec, Ontario, Ottawa and even Alberta could do to help." In Toronto, the Committee for a New Constitution told the Commissioners that a new form of economic cooperation between labour, government and business is required in order to halt the erosions of Canada's and Quebec's international competitive position. An anglophone Montrealer argued that the elimination of inflation, unemployment and poverty in Quebec would entail a radical restructuring of the social order in favour of "the cooperative possession of the means of production." His view was repeated by various leftist groups as well as by private citizens. Typical was the Montrealer who told the Commissioners that her objective was "the real independence of Quebec, that is, socialism, a system in which workers take over the economy and the government of their country." A Vancouverite approved: "If the people of Quebec feel that by removing themselves from the greater Canadian [profit-oriented] economy they stand a better chance of building that kind of society, my heart and good luck goes out to them and I say, do it please."

Finally, many participants did not see how the economic condition in Quebec or in Canada could improve much as long as the political future of the country remained uncertain. A representative business group in Toronto argued that the "Quebec independence threat to Canadian unity is creating a negative economic perspective in this country in general and in Quebec in particular," and invited the political authorities to postpone the referendum no further so that Quebecers could finally choose among the various political options offered to them.

“It is your duty to provide Canadians with a common goal which will bring together their individual aspirations. And what common goal could this be if it does not guarantee to all the right to work, the right to a decent standard of living, the right to financial security?”

(NDP Quebec, in Montreal)

“The economy of a country does not rest on youth programs. The Canadian government has always claimed that economic matters are its business. But the provinces are blamed for anything that goes wrong. All is fine when things go right. What have they done for the shoe and textile industries in Quebec?”

(from Charlesbourg, Quebec)

“To regain mastery of its economy and plan its own development, Quebec must have control of its fiscal and financial policies, communications, economic development, social affairs and foreign investments. It must be in a position to negotiate, on an equal footing, the advantages which its neighbours might seek. Federalism does not allow this. It is contrary to its very essence.”

(Le conseil des hommes d'affaires québécois, in Montreal)

“What the bulk of the Quebec population seems to want is a reasonable accommodation for their culture and language to the point where it will not be considered a drawback in terms of human and economic development to be a Québécois.”

(from Glenwood, Ont.)

“Certainly, stagnation and unemployment were here long before the PQ were elected, and certainly the Canadian dollar was overdue for devaluation before November of 1976, yet when the devaluation came, it was blamed on the new Quebec government. Self-serving attempts to deny responsibility for these problems by blaming Lévesque are unconvincing and can only aggravate relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada.”

(Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, in Regina)

“One of the devices that certain among them are tempted to use to prevent independence is one of the most pernicious: exodus. It hurts not only Quebec but also that which would remain of Canada, after a possible separation; an exodus is one of the most insidious double-edged swords that exists, and consequently, one of the most dangerous.”

(in Montreal)

“...years of uncertainty about Quebec will be exceedingly damaging to the Canadian economy. Mr. Lévesque is apparently willing to let Canada dangle indefinitely slowly in the winds. We feel that the timetable should be set for a definitive decision.”

(in Vancouver)

“I belong to an ethnic group and the guarantee of my freedom is my Canadian citizenship. I am, and I remain a Canadian, a Canadian who speaks French and who is proud of it. For I have chosen Canada and Canada has chosen me. For I have sworn allegiance to my country. . .”

(in Montreal)

Constitutional options

Quebecers who debated constitutional options at the Task Force hearings would likely not have objected to one of their own arguing that "it is growing steadily more apparent that bread-and-butter and the constitution are inseparably linked." The subject of constitutional reform was, in fact, raised many times at every hearing. Proposals covered a very broad range of options, from accommodation within the federal system as it now functions to complete independence for the province.

In Chicoutimi, one of the two Quebec Commissioners was asked: "What are they after, those Quebecers still willing to stay in Canada?" Quite a few participants, there and elsewhere, volunteered answers. Some did it with emotion, arguing that they were "proud of their country, Canada," of which their community had been the original "co-founders," to whom they individually had "pledged allegiance," and whose "wealth and beauties" they were not prepared "to abandon to their English-speaking compatriots." Others based their commitment to a federal Canada on economic and political considerations, stating, for example, that the "federal system provides the best framework within which to organize the economic, political, cultural and linguistic dialogue between Quebec and the other provinces," that there was a "built in" flexibility in the system allowing for the necessary adjustments, or that independence was not a "workable" option, considering the North American realities.

The Commissioners heard, however, no Quebecers arguing for the maintenance of the status quo, that is the present system, without change in the relationship between Quebec and the central government. Much more frequently and explicitly voiced were suggestions that the status quo "should be put definitely aside," that it was "clearly not an alternative to sovereignty-association" or that "major and blatantly needed" changes in the constitution were called for if Quebec were to be convinced to remain in Confederation.

Many Quebec speakers elaborated on the "needed constitutional changes." Their ideas were often similar to those put forward in the rest of the country (see Part V) by other Canadians who wanted some clarification of the respective responsibilities of each order of government, the elimination of legislative and administrative overlap, no "further federal intrusion into provincial fields" via Ottawa's spending power, or who wanted the provinces to have a greater say in the management of their own affairs and consequently a greater access to taxation revenues.

Many argued, however, that Quebec is not a province like the others but "the homeland of the French-Canadian nation." Quebecers, therefore, require for their provincial government, "the only political instrument that francophones control," constitutional responsibilities now residing in the central government. Some speakers were content to indicate only the general direction of change, stating that the end result should be to allow Quebecers "to become masters of their political, cultural and economic destiny," without having any longer "to beg for federal handouts." Some were more specific and presented a list of "new powers and responsibilities" that should be either transferred to Quebec or over which the provincial government should have legislative primacy. Most had in mind jurisdiction over culture and communications, fields which, according to an anglophone Montrealer, are more crucial for Quebec than for the other provinces because its "culture and language are at stake." Other speakers extended their "minimum demands" to social and manpower policies, to immigration and regional economic development, as well as to urban affairs. Still others added to that list "some aspects" of international trade and external affairs, "at least," as one Montrealer commented, "when the other party is a French-speaking country."

Would transferring these powers to Quebec amount to a "special," "particular," "distinct" or "privileged" status within the Canadian federation? Not really, argued a Quebec City participant, who told the Commissioners that the need to decentralize legislative authority is more urgently felt in Quebec than elsewhere and that there is nothing "wrong" about "differentiated decentralization." Many other proponents of giving more powers to the Quebec government had no hesitation about offering these new powers to "all provincial governments" who, after all, "are closer to the people." In such an approach, there would be no "special status" as all provinces could choose whether or not to exercise these new responsibilities.

“As a Québécois, the dream of my own sovereign country is tempting; but I am federalist because of our situation in North America.”

(in Quebec City)

“The provincial government has been seeking special status for Quebec within the Canadian Confederation for over a hundred years now. Mercier, back in 1885, was already talking about being master in his own province. Consequently, we believe that our country indeed has to move towards a substantial modification of its constitutional structures.”

(in Montreal)

“I strongly believe that [while] the status quo must definitely be cast aside, independence is not a realistic solution. We must reject it.”

(in Montreal)

“Although it does not seem to me necessary to seek a special constitutional status for Quebec, we will have to accept the need to meet Quebec's greater desire for decentralization. In other words, we will have to grow accustomed to the idea that decentralization can vary from one province to the next.”

(in Quebec City)

“I am sure that there are solutions. Am I to give the best one? Like you, I am searching, I am searching. I am giving some attention to one of these; I am very much interested by the possibility of special status. And yet I must say to the members of this Task Force that unless our rulers have more respect for the new constitution than they have for the present one, it will all be to no avail.”

(in Quebec City)

“I honestly believe that the main recourse is to accept our diversity within unity. Either the rest of the country recognizes that Quebec will always be different and finds ways to allow for this difference, or Quebec will no longer have any choice but to go its own way.”

(in Montreal)

“Perhaps we ought to have been promoting, long before this, a special status for Quebec.”

(in Charlottetown)

“We have a special feeling for the French, for they are the roots of our lovely country, and we are ready to make special concessions for them. We are willing to grant them special status.”

(The Ukrainian Canadian Committee, in Toronto)

“It is important to recognize the particular position of the French Canadians. The French Canadians have, over the last 200 years, exhibited their determination to retain their language and culture. To the extent it is felt that retention of the French language and culture requires transfer of legislative authority from Ottawa to Quebec, this should be done.”

(from Toronto)

“Special status for each and every province is something that has existed de facto for a long time.”

(in Calgary)

Outside Quebec, some participants were not particularly keen to accept this offer. To them, it presented just too many pitfalls: if accepted by the provinces, the consequences of "selective opting out" could be massive decentralization and a dangerously weakened central government. "Special status for all" might be simply a stepping stone to separation, as Quebec would likely demand one power after another and might want to go much further than the other provinces on this route.

A great number of non-Quebecers made it abundantly clear to the Commissioners that "special status for Quebec" was not an acceptable option either, that it would mean nothing but trouble. If this was what Quebec was asking for in order to remain in Confederation, they would prefer to see her go. Typical were these statements made in all parts of Canada: "Equal rights for all, and special status for none"; "no more appeasement or special constitutional concessions"; "social standards should be determined at a national level"; "all provinces are equal and Quebec is not to be regarded as one entity equal to all the English provinces put together."

The opposite view also had its supporters and they were almost as numerous. A citizen in Vancouver said that "special status" would be "administratively feasible." Another one in Winnipeg argued that there would be "nothing offensive" in granting Quebec a "more distinctive position under the constitution." The Ukrainian Canadian Committee of Toronto "was willing to grant it." The former leader of the Ontario New Democratic party, Stephen Lewis, "was not intimidated by the supposed bogey of special status." His argument — all provinces are different and special arrangements to accommodate these differences will always exist — was repeated in all centres visited by the Task Force. Some participants argued that particular status would not amount to a dramatic departure from current practice as Quebec had already withdrawn from a number of shared-cost programs. Others tried to explain that particular status would not mean "a privileged status" or that Quebecers would be getting a "better deal" at the expense of residents of other provinces: Quebecers would simply be paying a larger share of their taxes to their provincial government, allowing it to assume the cost of programs now financed by the central government, programs which would eventually be phased out. In Vancouver, two political scientists saw great merits in the option proposing special status for Quebec: "It would provide a clear platform for the anti-separatist forces in Quebec and, more importantly, would constitute a response to Quebec nationalism without imposing a uniform decentralization on the English-speaking provinces."

Other speakers did not commit themselves, wanting to know first "what are these additional powers" that Quebec requires "in order to fulfill her aspirations?" Previous paragraphs give an indication of what some Quebec federalists have in mind. Non-federalists wanted, as one of them said: "all powers going with political autonomy . . . in order to grow according to our own feelings and needs. . . in a society in which francophone Quebecers will assume their economic destiny." To them this could only be done with political independence.

A number of Quebecers explained to the Commissioners how they foresaw the transition from a federal system — "that regime which cannot last any longer" — to an independent Quebec. A Montreal business group echoed the views of many: "The only acceptable way is the renegotiation between two equally sovereign collectivities, of a new type of association, a confederal one." For a Montrealer, these negotiations would offer to both Quebec and Canada the "opportunity to choose a fraternal partner, one with whom each is already familiar." "The time has arrived"; "we are at the crossroads"; "peoples, like individuals must, having reached maturity, be able to confront an uncertain future"; "discuss in all serenity" and "friendship"; decide "by referendum," in agreement with international law," added others. "Please convey to your people our best greetings," concluded a Montrealer.

Self-determination

"Since November 15, 1976," the Commissioners were told at the Winnipeg evening session, "the question of self-determination for Quebec has become a central Canadian political issue." There was ample evidence, as the Task Force moved around the country, that this was indeed the case. Experts in constitutional law, political leaders, labour representatives and ordinary citizens debated whether Quebecers have, or should be given, "the right to determine their own future."

“We believe in one Canada, including Quebec. Quebec should develop herself as part of the Canadian nation and be treated no differently than any other province. Special status is not acceptable and will mean nothing but trouble. Accommodate, maybe, but it must be a two-way process. The government of Quebec has yet to indicate even the slightest willingness to accommodate.”

(in Regina)

“Full decentralization probably is not an attainable option. Quebec would insist upon controlling its health and welfare programs, as it does now, and would continue to strive for control over international relations and to acquire the symbols of sovereignty. Nothing less than sovereignty-association can satisfy the aspirations of the Québécois nationalist.”

(from Vancouver)

“I would beseech the Commission to present to the Canadian people the cultural and economic powers that the provinces now have and to tell us if the cultural aspirations of Quebec can be fulfilled with the powers it now has. MacGuigan, Lapierre and Forsey say, 'yes, they can' and that no further special status is needed. This came as a surprise to me. Now, if they are correct, then let's clearly tell the Canadian people that that is so and that no further powers are needed. If further powers are needed, then let's state what additional powers Quebec needs.”

(in Toronto)

“The national government must, if it is to maintain the support of all Canadians, be willing to deal equitably with all regions, yet recognize that all provinces cannot be treated in the same way.”

(in Calgary)

“...Quebecers would stay in Canada, but not at any price. We will continue to be Canadians so long as Canada accepts us, as long as we can be fully recognized as Canadians by the rest of the country.”

(in Montreal)

“We want our political autonomy, as well as those powers that come with it, so that we may build a society that fits our feelings and our needs. We wish to be proud of our 'Frenchness' and thereby cease to come begging to English Canada. We want to consider ourselves as having come of age and as being able to govern ourselves. We want to really feel like masters in our own house and not like a besieged nation.”

(in Montreal)

“The only reasonable solution is for two equally sovereign collectivities to negotiate a new confederation-type association. If this failed, total independence would be preferable to any type of federalism.”

(Le conseil des hommes d'affaires québécois, in Montreal)

“...three hundred years of existence have not been able to engulf us in a unitary Canadian world. ...we have to look at reality as it truly is. We are a conquered people. We would like to free ourselves, not by force of arms but by an act of faith in ourselves.”

(from Ville des Laurentides, Quebec)

Most French-speaking Quebecers were of the opinion that they should be allowed to do so. Typical was the comment from a group of French-speaking businessmen who argued that "to be dead opposed to secession or to the péquiste platform, does not authorize anyone to deny Quebecers the right to self-determination." A Montreal lawyer warned that English Canada could choose to oppose Quebec's right to secede democratically from Canada only at the risk of "grave consequences."

Many English-speaking participants agreed. The most eloquent were labour representatives. In Toronto, Commissioners were told: "English-speaking members of our union recognize that they do not own Quebec, and it is not for people outside Quebec to decide her future as a province or a country." In Saskatchewan, a spokesman for the Federation of Labour told the Task Force that even though his group would not like to see Quebec separate, it was strongly committed "to the right of the people of Quebec to determine their own future."

The support for Quebec's right to self-determination was variously motivated. For some, it was a question of Canada abiding by the Charter of the United Nations. "We supported that right in regard to the third world," said a citizen in Winnipeg, who wondered how self-determination could now be denied to the people of Quebec. A Torontonian argued that recognizing Quebec's right to secession would guarantee "that they will choose voluntarily to remain in our two-nation state." A Vancouverite told the Commissioners that the very suggestion that Quebec does not have the right to self-determination "is enough to drive anybody to think at least twice about remaining in Canada, if not actively to attempt to split away." A French-speaking Montrealer wanted the recognition of that right "once and for all," warning that so long as it is denied, "the oppression of French Canadians will continue."

Many expressions of support for Quebec's right to self-determination were accompanied, however, by qualifying statements that would constrain it "only if it is exercised democratically"; "if they so wish"; "if the constitution is amended to permit it"; "if they are willing to accept the responsibility for their decision." Conversely, some participants added weight to their expressions of support by such statements as: "It is our responsibility as Canadians to defend that right"; "let us not be part of any device or any argument that would frustrate that right"; let us recognize it "without any interference or any whipping up of chauvinist hysteria."

Participants did not always distinguish between the exercise of the right to self-determination and its eventual outcome. Many took it for granted that the final result would be an independent Quebec; for them, the right to self-determination was the right to "secede or to break up the country." The majority of those favourable to self-determination did not, however, see it that way. Speakers used such phrases as "up to independence"; "the right to self-determination including separation." But all options were open. A participant in Vancouver summed this up graphically: "To support the right to self-determination is not to support secession any more than supporting the right to divorce means that one seeks to wreck families." But in Quebec, many of those at the Task Force hearings claiming the right to self-determination, did not hide their hope that eventually, their province would become an independent country. Said one Montrealer, after pleading for self-determination: "We shall have it, our country."

Many English-speaking participants were opposed to Quebecers exercising that right without consultation with the rest of Canada. "It is an irresponsible stance to take," said an Edmontonian, referring to statements about Quebecers alone having the right to choose their own political future. Premier Davis of Ontario presented a similar view. He told the Commissioners that it is "utterly unrealistic to argue that for Quebecers the only issue is the determination of their own future, when no such fundamental decision can be taken without profoundly affecting us all." Some suggested that the decision should be submitted to a national referendum.

Another type of warning, expressed in statements heard even in Quebec, conjectured about the possible negative consequences of the exercise of such a right. To illustrate: "If French-speaking Quebec . . . has the right to self-determination, so do the Inuit and the English-speaking peoples of Montreal, of west Quebec and of the eastern townships"; self-determination is "an out-moded right in a world of global interdependence and limited sovereignty"; "it is fine on paper but if the outcome is separation, what future would Quebec have?"

Background

This chapter concentrates on the option proposed by the Parti Québécois. As the option is defined in terms of "sovereignty" and "association" and as a "real confederation," it is essential to know the meaning of these three terms.

Sovereignty

The essential elements of a state are: a population, a territory, a sense of community, a government and sovereignty. Sovereignty is the authority to make decisions, in the final recourse, on the direction to give to collective actions, and the power to enforce these decisions. A government — or two orders of government in a federation — exercises this authority, in the name of the state.

The sovereignty of a state (also called independence) is defined, in legal terms, as absolute. In practice, however, it is limited, if only by the rights of its own citizens and of other states. Sovereignty manifests itself in the fiscal, monetary, commercial, social and cultural policies of a government, the laws it enacts, the treaties it enters into, the diplomats it sends and receives, etc.

In a state with a unitary form of government, sovereignty is located in a single government.

Federation and confederation

In a federal form of government, such as Canada has, sovereignty is divided, under a constitution, between a central and provincial (or state) governments. Each of these two orders of government is allocated responsibilities in certain areas of public activities. The division is made in such a way that within a single political system, neither order of government is legally or politically subordinate to the other. Each is elected by, enacts laws for and levies taxes directly upon, the same electorate.

In a confederation, which is an association of sovereign states, the central political institutions derive their authority, generally from a treaty assented to by the member states, and are therefore subordinate to them. The officials of these institutions are delegates appointed and instructed by the member-state governments.

Economic association

Many forms of economic association are possible among sovereign states.

A free trade area involves the removal of tariff barriers on goods exchanged between or among member states.

In a customs union, member states also standardize customs tariffs applied to imports from other countries.

A common market adds to a customs union the removal of restrictions upon the movement of labour and capital among members.

A monetary union entails the adoption of a single currency and rate of exchange.

An economic union involves, in addition to a common market, varying degrees of harmonization of the economic policies of the member states. Examples of areas of harmonization are taxation, agriculture, transportation, social security and regional development.

In each of these forms of economic association, common agencies may be created to administer the common policies.

These definitions help us to understand Mr. Lévesque's following description of sovereignty-association: "Quebec will be sovereign when its National Assembly will be the only parliament entitled to legislate on its territory. . . and Quebecers will have no other taxes to pay than those



Harvey Boud
THE MONTREAL STAR

"I vote we let them keep their blasted province . . ."

they will decide to impose upon themselves. . . . [There will be only] one centre of decision. . . . However, we want to keep intact the common economic 'space,' [with Canada] advantageous to us and to others, with freedom of circulation for goods, capital and persons. . . . No customs, no passports. . . . We also share the view that we must ensure in common the present monetary system . . . through a joint central bank . . . and take our place in the North American and North Atlantic alliances. . . . Sovereignty and association are two complementary objectives not at all contradictory. [Later on] we will describe . . . the nature of the organizations which would see to the good functioning of the whole system" (October 10, 1978).

Questions

What do Canadians think about the possible "secession" of Quebec from the Canadian federation? Do they feel it is inevitable? Could it be effected amicably? What would be the social and cultural, economic, political and psychological consequences of sovereignty-association, on Quebec itself and on the rest of Canada?

What are the chances of working out an economic association between a politically "sovereign" Quebec and Canada? What type of association would be feasible?

“Today, Quebecers are once again at the crossroads. The ideal of a country, of a territory of their own is coming closer to being feasible.”

(Société nationale populaire du Québec, in Montréal)

“The goal of the PQ government, my party in Quebec City, is not to seek a third option for the benefit of Ottawa or to help remake the Canadian constitution; it is to bring about the national sovereignty of our one and only country, Quebec, before God and before man, in economic association with whomever we please. But why not with English Canada?”

(in Montréal)

“I think that we should strike out, at any cost, the word separatist from our vocabulary, for the péquiste is not a separatist. The péquiste simply states: We are a family with two beds; we want our own bed without stopping others from having theirs. And take it that we will have ours. Also that others will have their own. I can't assure you, Mr. Commissioners, that there will be no shuffling about between these two beds.”

(in Quebec City)

“I find myself suggesting to you, members of this Task Force, that you return to your own country and that you speak to the men and women among your people and give them the sincere regards of the Quebec people and that, finally, you should impress upon them our real desire to live with them in friendship but as complete equals, as country to country.”

(in Montréal)

“As for Quebec, amendments [to the constitution] cannot heal its wounds. We have been exploited for too long and we have been looked upon, because we were French Canadians, as second-rate citizens by the anglophone community. Independence is well on its way and will not be stopped; it's only a matter of time.”

(from Lac St-Jean, Quebec)

“Quebec will come about, is already coming into being with joy and gladness. There will be no unnecessary hate or spirit of revenge, no pettiness or lies, for when a man has confidence in himself he does not need to resort to threats or trickery. The confident man takes his due share and leaves enough for the others.”

(in Montréal)

“There is nothing ridiculous about this matter, in spite of the sarcasm emanating from the political opponents of Quebec sovereignty. This is neither a return to tribal life nor the beginning of balkanization on planet Earth. Rather, it is simply the formal manifestation, of which the twentieth century has seen many examples, of a nationalism lived within internationalism, in the same way unity can exist in diversity.”

(in Montréal)

“...Now it is our turn to ask: What do English Canadians want? The third option, what does it mean? Why, our road ahead is clear; our actions have prepared the way and I do not believe we can turn back. Besides, historically speaking, no people that has had a taste of independence chooses to go back. We would have to contradict history.”

(from Charlesbourg, Quebec)

Opinions and proposals

Most participants at the Task Force hearings had something to say about the consequences of a possible secession of Quebec. "I do not care"; "this is not my problem"; "emotionally, I cannot react"; "it will not affect us," some said. More often, however, feelings of concern, fear and betrayal, or of admiration, hope and approbation were voiced.

The words and the reality

"Drop that word 'separatist'; a péquiste is not a separatist," pleaded a Quebec City participant, as he explained to the Commissioners his understanding of the ultimate objective of the Parti Québécois. Many Quebecers who supported the party's position also resented the label "separatist" being applied either to themselves or to their party. They preferred expressions like "souverainiste," or "associationiste."

Those who strongly opposed the Parti Québécois platform did not always accept these refinements. For many of them, a Quebecer who had either voted for Mr. Lévesque or who endorsed political independence for the province was a "separatist" or a "secessionist," i.e., someone who is trying to "break up" the present structure of the country. The association proposed by the Parti Québécois will not change that reality, according to a French-speaking Vancouverite, "as it is clearly a contradictory attempt to be part of Canada without wanting to assume any of the responsibilities."

Many groups, particularly those representing labour and business, offered their interpretation of the Quebec government's program. The province would, if the majority of its citizens so decided at the referendum, become a separate, independent, sovereign state. Bilateral negotiations would then be initiated, with "Ottawa," said some, with "English Canada," said others, for the purpose of establishing an economic association between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The association "would preserve" many of the existing interprovincial economic relationships, with at least free-trade arrangements between the two "partners." Decisions would be made on a "one to one" basis. "Is that a realistic scenario?" asked many, as they wondered if Canada and Quebec will ever be confronted with that eventuality.

Is independence inevitable?

Some speakers, both French and English, thought that Quebec independence was inevitable. "All our history calls for independence"; every French-speaking Quebecer "is tempted by the dream of sovereignty," said two Montrealers. "Quebec will never stop continuing its forward progress to become a separate nation. . . the determination will never pass"; it is "an unfolding process," speakers in Vancouver believed. These views were opposed by others who thought that sovereignty was only a dream, or a "power play," unrealizable in view of the interdependence of regions and communities in Canada.

Many, again from both language groups, observed that Quebecers had never been allowed to decide for themselves if they wanted to be Canadians, "to vote for something," as an Edmontonian put it. "The Anglo-Canadian colonial state has subjugated the nation of Quebec from the beginning," claimed a speaker in St. John's. "At no point" have French Quebecers been permitted "to determine their own political future," said another in Regina.

Social consequences

In describing their views on sovereignty-association, participants at the Task Force hearings lacked neither colour nor emotion. From péquiste members or sympathizers, Commissioners heard such statements as: "to become adult"; "not in isolation but open to the world"; "master of our destiny in a politically sovereign French-speaking state fashioned to our personality"; "where anglophone rights will be respected"; "living in good friendship and in perfect equality with Canada"; "within the framework of a negotiated economic association."

"It won't be a return to tribal life nor the beginning of the balkanization of the planet" argued a

“The French people want to be free. You English people, you had your turn, you've lost it. Forget it.”

(in Toronto)

“Quebec will never stop continuing its forward progress to become a separate nation. There will be confrontation followed by referendum ad nauseam. Eventually, all the present-day protagonists will pass away, but the determination of the Québécois to be on his own will never pass away.”

(in Vancouver)

“Monsieur Lévesque has fallen in love with an idea. The Québécois have fallen in love with an idea. And boy, it's going to be something to get them to fall in love with something else.”

(in Calgary)

“The péquistes' call for independence is not more than an attempt by the Quebec state to strengthen the position of the new urban petty bourgeoisie of francophone technocrats whose aspirations first came to be realizable under Lesage's so-called quiet revolution.”

(in Vancouver)

“No later than yesterday, you saw anglophones come before you and speak without prejudice, open to the French fact and using our language. At the same time, and again right here at home, we see a new empire, worthy of Bokassa the First, being built for his own self-glorification, imposing on his people the narrow vision of a society reduced to a single language.”

(in Montreal)

“In appearance, the preservation of the language rights of the anglophone families who have lived in Quebec for generations may be continued for a time. Even so, English is doomed to become no more than a 'kitchen language' in the province.”

(from Vancouver)

“I believe that every culture has a right to exist and that the French-Canadian culture must exist. But it must exist without bigotry, the kind of bigotry we saw here tonight; because if this bigotry is the foundation of a new Quebec nation then that nation won't last very long.”

(in Montreal)

“If Quebec secedes, the rest of Canada should immediately declare itself a unilingual nation.”

(in St. John's)

“Now the division that the Quebec government intends to bring about would be most detrimental to all the Indians of Canada, and even more so to the Indians living in the Canadian territory known as Quebec. Such a division would also lead to the complete disappearance of the Indian races. Can an energetic and modern society such as ours allow itself to hold such attitudes towards the first occupants of the vast country that is Canada?”

(Great Council of the Huron Nation, in Montreal)

French-speaking Montrealer, as he talked of the society he envisioned. There are numerous contemporary examples, he maintained, which illustrate that "nationalism and internationalism" are not more incompatible than "diversity and unity." Restricting his analogy to Quebec and Canada, a speaker in Quebec City expressed a similar view in a humorous manner: "Each of the two members of the Canadian family will have his own bed but there might very well be exchanges between the two beds."

Many of those opposed to sovereignty-association presented to the Commissioners, in French as well as in English, a very different picture of the new society proposed by the Parti Québécois. Taken together, their comments anticipate a bleak future: "an ethnocentric, intolerant and bigoted society," "divided within itself" along linguistic and racial lines; cut off psychologically by a "natural backlash" and economically by "trade barriers" from the rest of Canada; dominated by a "clique of petit bourgeois technocrats." It would be "offering the narrow vision of a society reduced to a single language"; living under the "false illusion of economic and cultural security"; with the working class footing the bill for the "independentist adventure"; "having to put up with empty bellies after the golden dream is shattered."

Cultural consequences

Many English-speaking Canadians, not living in Quebec, expressed to the Task Force the fear that the secession of Quebec would bring about the spiritual and cultural destruction of Canada. Some argued that the country could survive in a material sense, "but if Quebec leaves . . . a part of my soul will leave with her." Others argued, as did a student at the Halifax Grammar School, that culturally, "the English would be in danger of fading into an Americanism that would leave us no identity at all." Canada without Quebec, asserted a group in Toronto, "would be crippled physically and culturally [Quebec being] an important part of our body." Many other participants developed the same idea, i.e., that Canada "needs Quebec . . . its language and its culture to make her the unique nation she is."

In Quebec, many English-speaking participants did not see much future for their own culture and language after separation. Said one at the Montreal hearings, "The message more and more [English-speaking] Quebecers are receiving is that they must assimilate or leave." Said another one: "We will remain in a French Quebec and accept any reasonable policy short of separation or the removal of our fundamental freedoms."

Some French-speaking participants understood their English-speaking compatriots' concern for their own cultural welfare: "Menaced in their culture, their language and their rights, native peoples, anglophones and new Canadians will feel ill at ease in a separated Quebec." Some francophones tried to reassure them. One Montrealer spoke of a "French Quebec where anglophones born in Quebec and all new Quebecers would be integrated, but their human rights would be respected." At times, however, the mood at the Montreal evening hearings became less tolerant. A speaker told the Commissioners that the anglophone minority will have to let itself be assimilated by the francophone majority or "pack up." Some stated, that "the fate of the Quebec anglophones will always be more comfortable than that of the francophones living outside Quebec."

A representative of the Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario reflected a group consensus when he said: "If we have survived to this day, it is not only due to our determination but also to the fact that five out of six French-speaking Canadians live in Quebec." Outside Quebec a feeling of uncertainty prevailed. Most of the francophone groups feared that the secession of Quebec would eventually eliminate any chance of cultural or linguistic survival they have. Canada's commitment to the goals of bilingualism would weaken if not die, argued many francophones, confirmed in that view by a considerable number of anglophones. "Why would it not be so?" said the franco-Albertans of Calgary. "If Quebec were independent," anglo-Canadians would say: "What's the use of helping these francophones outside Quebec?" "We will then be confronted," francophone groups added, with "an unattractive choice, to be assimilated or reduced to the exhibiting of our folklore like any other ethnic group." In British Columbia, the message was not different: "Franco-Columbians will have to ponder and maybe come to the

“How can the French Canadian fail to realize that separation will not create the barriers between French and English culture which he desires, and it will definitely not isolate him from the influence of the English world? Trade relations will continue to go on in English and French. The English population of Quebec will continue to demand English newspapers, radio, and television.”

(in Halifax)

“If Quebec leaves, a part of my soul will leave with her.”

(in Halifax)

“We cannot imagine Canada without Quebec. It would be a different Canada without the French culture. . . music. . . their cooking. . . customs and so on. Withdrawal of Quebec would separate the Atlantic provinces from central and western Canada. . . There would be a situation like Bangladesh with East and West Pakistan. We need Quebec. . . we need their culture and their language to make Canada the unique nation she is.”

(in St. John's)

“There can be no Canada without Quebec. It is very doubtful if English Canada would survive for long without Quebec, for why should there be two melting pots in North America?”

(in Charlottetown)

“In the event of a majority voting yes for independence in the referendum, it is obvious that francophone Quebecers will feel at home, rid of their complex of a defeated people.”

(in Montreal)

“Were Quebec to separate, the Anglo-American continental pressures, which are unilingual and which already impinge heavily from the south, could be reinforced and strengthened by unilingual neighbours of the east and west, who could gradually suffocate Quebec through a disillusioned pursuit of cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Quebec, in short, could in the end be drowned in the anglophone sea of the north continent.”

(in Edmonton)

“Quebec wants to separate and I am 100 per cent for that, but let's do it now. There have been fifteen months wasted while every politician in the country has been bending over backwards to try and please Quebec. Let's not wait any longer. Let's separate now, and then the other nine provinces can get on with more important things.”

(from Toronto)

“At this moment, I resent the special demands made by Quebec and the concessions that have been given to her by our federal government in their desperate attempt to keep her satisfied and in Confederation.”

(from Brandon)

“To have Quebec accept the status quo and forfeit the trimmings and the trappings of national independence, Canada would have to buy Quebec's participation by economic measures which we could not afford.”

(from Regina)

“The provinces and territories of Canada other than Quebec will become a stronger and more unified nation without Quebec.”

(in Vancouver)

realization that only the Québécois still have a chance to live in French in North America." A franco-Ontarian made his decision: "Better a French Quebec than a lost Canada."

But what would be the effect of sovereignty-association on the French-speaking majority in Quebec? "If the creation of a Quebec state would assure the survival of French, I would accept it, but it is not the case." This is how a Torontonians justified, in French, his opposition to the secession of Quebec. Many other participants argued similarly that independence might prove to be a "trap" that could spell the death of a French culture, even in Quebec. The reasons most often invoked were the following: without the protection of a larger federal union, Quebec would "suffocate" under anglo-american continental pressures and might even be absorbed by the United States, in which case the status of the French language would be "the same as that of the French in Louisiana"; the departure of the English-speaking minority would make it more vital for Quebecers to learn English; an impoverished Quebec economy could only hinder greater cultural achievements; a culture never thrives anyway in a monolithic "ghetto."

In Quebec, a few participants picked up the same themes. Some were willing to predict that, with independence, francophone Quebecers would need to become more and more bilingual to "survive economically"; that "75 years after independence, Quebec would be absorbed by the U.S. with its language and culture." They were isolated cases. Most speakers, whether or not disposed to separation, anglophones or francophones, were either not worried about the future or believed that the French language and the Quebec culture would thrive after secession. Typical were these two statements, one from an anglophone ardently opposed to secession, the other from a young francophone passionately supporting "my PQ government": "The Quebec separatists, in a very real sense, offer security for the French language and culture, something which Canada should, and does not, adequately provide"; "I am an independentist by pure and simple logic, for the sake of my descendants to whom I want to bequeath the only thing I will probably be able to hand down to them, my language, my religion and my culture."

Political consequences

If Quebec "separates," the Commissioners were told in Toronto, "the idea of Canada would perish." This was a central theme voiced by many Canadians from every region of the country. They feared that the country could not endure the trauma of separation, that it would, as one Montrealer put it, "ring the death knell for Canada."

Canada would survive, some participants thought, but "as something other than Canada," as a "nine-province nation" or as a "collection of new nations based on the various regions of the country." Without Quebec, claimed a Charlottetowner, Canada might break up into regional states, a process that would lead to a "balkanization of the northern half of North America." Some expressed the view that the other provinces would "fall like dominos" and, as a Sicilian group in Toronto believed, would be "gobbled up by our neighbours to the south."

There was widespread concern that Quebec separation would further isolate the maritime provinces. Typical was the comment of a resident of Charlottetown who declared that the various links that bind his region to the rest of Canada owe their existence to "fragile political agreements which would disintegrate" if separation took place.

Many participants thought that the pressure on the Atlantic provinces to join the United States might prove to be irresistible. Some suspected, however, that the Americans might not welcome such a development. "After all," quipped a Newfoundlander, "this is not Alberta yet." Others felt, as did the Federation Chamber of Commerce, that "Quebec's separation could result in renewed interest among the eastern provinces in the concept of maritime union." Others believed that the maritimes could remain part of a fragmented Canada, but this alternative, as the Atlantic provinces' Chamber of Commerce indicated, "would not offer great security for the region." Some of the Acadians who appeared before the Task Force indicated that "if our brothers from Quebec decided to separate," they "would wish to remain a part of Canada." Other Acadians made it clear that they would, however, demand their own province.

Some Canadians drew to the attention of the Commissioners the international political

“Many people do not appreciate that Canada will be physically severed, and that in order to go from Ontario to the Atlantic provinces, one must pass through a foreign country. The pressure on the Atlantic provinces, as a result of such severance, to join with our American neighbours may well prove to be irresistible.”

(Ted Malone, leader of the Liberal party of Saskatchewan, in Regina)

“In Canada and in Quebec, we should stop thinking, once and for all, that history is watching us and that the fate of mankind depends on what we, Canadians and Quebecers, will do. History doesn't care a damn about Canada and Quebec. We don't have any lessons to give to other countries: though Canada crumbles, federations will still continue to exist, and if Quebec succeeds, the small nations of this planet should not take this as a guarantee of success.”

(in Montreal)

“René Lévesque should be jailed for treason. I fought five years for the preservation of our great country and I do not intend to sit idly by and watch, while a bunch of idiots try to cut off a slice of my country.”

(from Severn Bridge, Ont.)

“The federal government must state that it is prepared to take military action to ensure that Quebec remain a part of Canada. This is essential.”

(from Scarborough)

“The use of force to hold Canada together cannot be tolerated.”

(New Brunswick Federation of Labour, in Moncton)

“We are probably the only country in the world which won't fight a civil war in attempting to hold itself together.”

(in Charlottetown)

“In the event of a decision to separate from Canada, we oppose any use of military force against Quebec. We have no desire to impose an outside will upon the Quebec nation.”

(Student's Union, in Edmonton)

“I fear, for I am an anglophone; I have read the English language newspapers and I am afraid of the climate prevailing in English Canada. I shudder at those threats of force against Quebec; I am afraid that we might witness events such as those of October 1970. I fear economic threats like the Sun Life Company leaving the province. That, I suspect, was something like the Brinks operation.”

(in Montreal)

“At New Year's, Trudeau once again reiterated his threat to use armed force against the Quebec people, and at the same time, a PQ organ published an article saying that there should be a Quebec army. So they plan to use the Canadian people as cannon fodder in a reactionary civil war.”

(in Montreal)

implications of Quebec's secession. "If not the eye of the world," commented a citizen of Regina, "at least the eyes of the two giants of the world will be on Canada." A Vancouverite reflected the attitude of many when he declared that "Canada's international reputation as a world power will be greatly damaged." "What will they [the Americans] think," asked a representative of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Toronto, "of this well-ordered, well-led democracy, when it appears to be falling apart at the seams?" Other participants expressed a fear that an independent Quebec might have no interest in supporting NATO or NORAD. "Separation would mean that a foreign language state would be created minutes away by air from many U.S. cities. A look at the map shows Quebec almost as close to New York as Cuba is to Miami," reflected one speaker.

Some citizens argued that the process of secession "will invite political instability and imperil democracy" in Quebec. "The smaller the political entity," said one Torontonian, "the easier it is for some very radical groups to take over." A few participants at the hearings raised the possibility of an independent Quebec falling into the hands of the Communists. "Do you think," asked a Torontonian, "that [the followers of] Mao-Tse Tung or somebody else will not move in there and make another Cuba?" Some speakers feared even worse consequences. "The instant Quebecers . . . declare unilaterally that they are not a part of Canada," stated an Edmontonian, "the civil war starts; . . . it's going to be dirty, it's going to make Northern Ireland look like a Sunday school picnic."

Conversely, many other participants maintained that the whole of Canada would not only survive but would prosper after Quebec's secession. The majority of them tended to view Quebec as the "weak link" province, the source of Canadian disunity. Their solution to the problem of Canadian unity found expression in the comments of a citizen from Toronto: "The sooner we assist Quebec to separate, the happier we will be." Only then, added a Calgarian, can "we, the English-speaking segment, form an extremely unified and aggressive country." A Vancouverite, convinced that Quebec will opt out, said, "After she leaves, the provinces and territories of Canada, other than Quebec, will become a stronger and more unified nation." A Torontonian concurred: "It will not be the end of Canada, so I say [since Quebec independence is inevitable], let us part now as friends rather than later as enemies."

Economic consequences

For a majority of English-speaking participants and for more than a few Quebecers, the crucial consideration was "how better or worse off we will all be if separation occurs." Typical was this statement from a financial group in Toronto: "Anyone who ever tried to balance his income and expenses knows that somewhere the world of economics becomes the dictator." A Quebec business group argued at the Montreal hearings that the great majority of Quebecers would "favour independence" if it were not for the fear, "unsubstantiated," of negative economic consequences. From a Quebecer working in Edmonton, Commissioners heard that the discussions taking place now in Quebec are not about whether "we should vote to stay in Canada" but rather, "will we survive if we get out?"

A dozen or so speakers felt that the role of economics was being exaggerated. A participant at the Edmonton evening session summarized this view: "Not all things are to be determined by the balance sheet of dollars and cents." In Toronto, a citizen expressed a similar thought: "Economics or not, nothing is going to stop the unfolding process now taking place in Quebec." Other participants, while admitting that the economic consequences of secession would be serious, warned that the "cultural, political and spiritual loss to the country would be far more important and a far greater tragedy."

From many Quebecers at the Montreal and Quebec City sessions, the Task Force got an even stronger message: the outcome of the referendum will not be influenced by "doomish" economic projections, nor by threats of economic sanctions. Said one: "The economic arguments have little chance of being heard; more than bread is needed to accept the society in which one lives." Former Premier Alex Campbell of Prince Edward Island agreed: "It should now be clear that many Quebecers would choose to separate and are prepared to suffer the consequences as a price they must pay to preserve something cherished more than economic well-being."

“Many Canadians may not be ready to accept the idea of total independence, and may become conditioned to the idea of the use of force to prevent it. How the violent tearing up of Canada would occur does not matter much at this time, since we could not do much about it; but we can do something about the actions that would lead to violence.”

(from Regina)

“In the eventuality that it be found impossible to stem the forces of separatism, [or to] convince the majority of the people of Quebec of the need for, and the advantages of Confederation, and the rest of Canada of the need for, and advantages of, a restructured nation of linguistic equality and expression, then let us separate in the peace and freedom befitting intelligent peace-loving people, so that we may live side by side in harmony, if not in purpose.”

(from Ste-Anne, Manitoba)

“Separatists have chosen to almost completely overlook the economic contingencies of a break-up, by considering independence only from the angle of emotion and passion.”

((L'Ordre militaire et hospitalier de St-Lazare de Jérusalem, in Montreal)

“After all, the Quebec problem did not start with inflation and unemployment.”

(from Ottawa)

“Let us not be misled by the suggestion that all we need to do is improve the Canadian economy and Quebecers will be happy and content as Canadians. This is not what we have learned from independence groups throughout the world. Many Quebecers are emotionally involved in the heady intoxication of prideful belief in their culture and linguistic heritage. Jobs and security, though important, do not compete with the sweet wine of liberty, to those who are convinced of the political, cultural and other advantages of separation and independence.”

(in Winnipeg)

“We strongly believe that any form of separation of one or more provinces from the others — even under the guise of sovereignty-association — would be an economic tragedy for all of Canada.”

(Business Council on National Issues, in Ottawa)

“...The separation of Quebec would probably increase the difficulty of obtaining foreign capital because the confidence of investors will further erode and the cost of borrowing may become prohibitive. In addition, the costs of reaching the important central Canadian markets will probably escalate because Quebec, as a sovereign state, will cut the region off geographically from these markets. If Quebec, under these conditions, were to tax goods in transit, the costs may become more prohibitive. The Atlantic region would then require further equalization from central and western Canada, and we fear that the remainder of Canada, with a reduced tax base, will become increasingly intolerant of the regions' escalating demands.”

(Fredericton Chamber of Commerce, in Fredericton)

“The essence of this nation is the east-west strands of transportation, communication and financial flows. These owe their existence not to God or nature but to fragile political agreements which are disintegrating under the pressures for Quebec independence. The inevitable result will be the isolation of the Atlantic region as these strands are ruptured or constricted by the delineation of new jurisdictional authority. The only remaining questions relate to the degree and timing of the impact on this region.”

(in Halifax)

The Task Force heard some speakers arguing that Quebec's departure would have a limited economic impact on either Quebec or the rest of Canada. Those participants believed that with Quebec gone, Canada would be free, at last, to tackle its "real problems" which are unemployment and inflation. Other speakers claimed that the economic gains to their province or region would outweigh any possible short-term losses or costs. They had estimated that trade between their province and Quebec was "negligible" and could be replaced, even advantageously, by imports from other countries.

The "no loss" or "better off" arguments were, however, comparatively few. The majority of participants, be they English or French-speaking, believed that Quebec's secession would have disastrous consequences for the whole of Canada. Comments often heard to describe the outcome included: "unmitigated disaster," "economic tragedy," "myriad of financial problems," "economic nonsense," "brutal economic readjustments," "small likelihood of survival."

Which province or region would be the most seriously affected by secession? Most participants answered: "we will all lose"; "all sides will suffer"; "no part can survive on its own." Many reasons were offered: markets would be closed, or at least hampered, for western and eastern Canadian primary products and for Ontario and Quebec manufactured goods; foreign capital would be more difficult to obtain and the cost of borrowing might become prohibitive; the access to some natural resources would become more restricted for those provinces where they are in short supply; our ability to counter multinational and monopolistic forces would be weakened; the bargaining position of both Canada and Quebec would be reduced in international trade negotiations.

A few participants argued that the cost of splitting up the country would be borne unevenly. English-speaking participants saw Quebec and the Atlantic region as the principal losers. But some westerners and quite a few Ontarians added Ontario to that list. Commissioners heard some specific references to the importance of the Quebec markets for the prairie cattlemen and farmers.

Maritimers and Newfoundlanders repeatedly shared with the Commissioners their fear that the independence of Quebec would spell serious economic difficulties for their region. An Atlantic business group put it this way at the Moncton hearings: "If the country drifts to separation, the Atlantic provinces will wake up one morning with a very unpleasant hangover, not the least of which will be a rude jolt to the standard of living." Many others agreed that the Atlantic provinces are especially vulnerable. The reasons offered were numerous, but most often heard were: the disruption of east-west transportation and communications links and financial flows; the increased costs of reaching central Canadian markets; the loss of some Quebec markets for primary products; higher prices for consumer goods imported from Quebec after the assumed erection of tariff or non-tariff barriers by "Canada"; a threat to the development of the great resource potential of the Labrador rivers and the Fundy tides; the weakened capacity of a truncated Canada to foot the bill for reducing regional disparities through equalization payments.

"Ontario has probably the most to lose if our country splits apart," Dr. Stuart Smith, the leader of the Ontario opposition, told the Commissioners, after acknowledging that his province "clearly has done particularly well by the union of 1867." A few others at the Toronto hearings made similar remarks. An agricultural group told the Task Force that farmers in the eastern Ontario counties would be hit hard, as their city clients would lose buying power. Other groups and many private citizens referred to the vital importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway, wondering if an independent Quebec would not restrict its use for Ontario-bound ships in an attempt to seek economic advantages. Said a Toronto citizen: "It is worrying that the ports of Quebec City and Montreal may be separated from Ontario by some barriers."

Other English-Canadian participants expressed similar views. The former leader of the B.C. Liberal party told the Commissioners that "the greatest loser by far would not be Quebec but Ontario," adding that, with the rest of what used to be Canada buying on a free market, Ontario would be bankrupted. A Vancouver business group surveyed the opinions of its members and found that quite a few of them felt that the possible "loss" of the St. Lawrence Seaway would be disastrous to Ontario. But, concluded the group, the net economic gains for Ontario might more than compensate. Why? "The loss of Quebec would leave Ontario with greater clout than ever in

“We as business people are convinced the withdrawal of Quebec or any other major region from Confederation would do incalculable economic harm on all sides.”

(Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, in Toronto)

“Transportation policy . . . jurisdiction over the St. Lawrence Seaway . . . the winter ports of Quebec City and Montreal . . . tax policies . . . federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. . . . These and other programs now in place are national in implication, and it would require years of effort and frustration to sort out these areas in the event of Quebec's separation. . . .”

(Ontario Federation of Agriculture, in Toronto)

“Canada's loss would be our loss [B.C.] — less so economically than other regions, perhaps, but still exceedingly painful, as we face a decade of uncertainty and the reality of a far smaller and more specialized and vulnerable economy in the world market place.”

(Gordon F. Gibson, former leader of the B.C. Liberal party, in Vancouver)

“The maritimes and Ontario are likely to suffer economically if Quebec leaves Confederation. In Saskatchewan, on the other hand, the departure of Quebec may even result in short-term economic benefits. We sell very little to Quebec. . . . We do not buy extensively in Quebec, except for the consumer goods which come from the Ontario-Quebec industrial area, most of them at what we regard as inflated, tariff-protected prices. Again, we might receive at least as good a deal from an independent Quebec as we have traditionally received from the great industrial producers of central Canada.”

(Premier Blakeney, in Regina)

“From a western perspective, the most difficult economic adjustments would probably relate to agricultural and forest product exports to Montreal, which is a major market for western producers.”

(in Calgary)

“The first decade of independence would be extremely difficult for Quebec even if she were helped by cooperation of the rest of Canada to make the severe economic adjustment gradually. During the first few years, perhaps half a million people would leave the province, many of them taking their jobs with them. . . . The other provinces would insist that the maintenance operations of the airlines and railways be moved to other cities with high unemployment. In addition, the labour intensive shoe, clothing and textile industries would suffer very high unemployment. . . . Most of these exports are heavily tariff-protected. The industries producing them would lose much of their market.”

(from Vancouver)

“. . . the proponents of the independence of Quebec, in an understandable fervor, overstate the benefits that could accrue from such an eventuality and seriously underestimate the negative effects that would result not only in economic terms, but also with regard to human relations.”

(Alcan Aluminium Limited, in Montreal)

Ottawa," with the result that the economic interests of the west would be sacrificed even more to the interests of Ontario. Premier Blakeney of Saskatchewan disagreed, and told the Task Force that in a Canada without Quebec, the west might be in a stronger position to redress some of its deeply felt economic grievances.

The proponents of the Quebec-the-main-loser thesis substantiated their predictions by presenting a number of arguments:

During and after secession, Quebec might be confronted with a hostile or indifferent world. American investors, particularly, apprehensive of the political, social and economic climate, might significantly reduce the flow of capital. Many companies would tend to leave Quebec for Ontario or other provinces in order to retain their wider Canadian markets.

Unilingual Quebec professionals would be cut off from the mainstream of research and development.

Quebec would not only cease to receive any financial assistance from Ottawa, but the burden of having to assume her share of the national debt and to purchase federal properties within her boundaries would severely mortgage her future.

The industrial structure of Quebec, weighted as it is with many "soft" sectors like textiles, clothing, footwear and furniture, would be rendered even more vulnerable. The Canadian market for these goods might be lost to foreign substitutes that inhabitants of other provinces could purchase, tariff-free, at lower prices.

Future economic negotiations with the rest of Canada would likely be on a quid pro quo or give-and-take basis, "as between foreign countries." Being weaker than Canada, Quebec might very well have to concede more than it would like.

Many participants were not convinced by these arguments and the Commissioners heard a considerable number of rebuttals. The following are representative:

Quebec could succeed as a sovereign country, considering that it is three times the size of France and has enormous untapped natural resources, hydro-electric power and a technically skilled population. Quebec's potential would not disappear with independence and even if the rest of Canada or the United States refused to deal with her, other countries would very likely be pleased to take their place. "Let us not forget that the planet is not limited to Canada and the United States," commented one participant.

Having better control over the instruments of her economic policies, such as taxes, currency and tariffs, Quebec would be in a position to pursue her own economic objectives, including the promotion of francophones to the decision-making positions in businesses operating within her boundaries.

With a quarter of a million unemployed in Quebec, with entire industries endangered, with national economic policies favouring Ontario, many said that there is little point in arguing that things could get worse.

Economic association

"Could some formal economic links between Quebec and Canada be established to prevent the disruption of the Canadian economic union?" The spectrum of views expressed on this question was very broad. In English Canada, more often than not, the Commissioners were informed that economic association would be rejected. However, many participants, in Quebec particularly, were willing to accept the view of the Parti Québécois that the rest of Canada would find it useful and even necessary to negotiate. In all cities visited by the Task Force, there were calls for caution, for more in-depth study, before the proposal be "bluntly rejected" or "blindly accepted."

Those who opposed the Parti Québécois' idea of economic association argued their case in terms of psychology and politics as well as in terms of "cold economics." A French-speaking Montrealer

“The textile industry, in both its primary and secondary phases, is a prime example of an enterprise whose viability would be greatly reduced, if not totally jeopardized, by separation. Where would its market be? Buyers would naturally turn elsewhere because they would certainly find cheaper prices elsewhere.”

(A group of Quebec labour officials, in Ottawa)

“Furthermore, from an economic viewpoint, the strategists in Ottawa lie every day, as do their Quebec supporters, when they try to frighten us by saying that independence would cause a serious economic crisis. Any reputable economist would dismiss their argument and show that there would be, at most, a temporary financial readjustment, that Quebec has all that is needed to become a model for the young nations born of the great autonomist movement of the 20th century.”

(in Montreal)

“Quebec’s resources will not disappear if Quebec becomes a country. As far as investments and the sale of our products are concerned, if Canadians and Americans were to refuse to deal with us, we would have to come to realize that Canadians and Americans are not the only people on this earth.”

(La Société nationale populaire du Québec, in Montreal)

“The economic gains of political independence are related to the opportunity that the state of Quebec has in establishing policies to achieve the stabilization of the situation and to promote its long-term development so that its natural, material and human resources will be put to better use than under the present federal regime.”

(in Quebec City)

“At the same time we must make clear, without venom, what Quebec stands to lose by tearing Canada apart and leave no doubt that whatever choices may be offered in the referendum, the option of having your cake and eating it too does not exist. Even if ‘sovereignty-association’ were to attract a majority of the votes, the rest of Canada will be under no obligation to provide the ‘association’ part of the package, and may well be in no mood to do so.”

(from Ottawa)

“One thing for sure, unless we are naive or wish to delude ourselves, there would likely be a backlash from the English of the other provinces and it would be an illusion to claim that negotiations between a separated Quebec and the other provinces over a new association would be easy. As a matter of fact, it would be normal for them to react negatively, since they would have tried, unsuccessfully, to keep us within Confederation.”

(in Montreal)

“If Quebec decided to separate, we would have to ask ourselves what advantages there would be in maintaining links with a Quebec which is unwilling to continue supporting a federal government, but which would continue to benefit from our tariff structure. I cannot imagine very many in Saskatchewan being interested in such a proposition.”

(Premier Blakeney, in Regina)

“The Western provinces probably don’t have much sympathy for Lévesque’s plans. Furthermore, if that province were to separate, Alberta might not feel inclined to continue to sell oil below world prices nor would it support the textile and shoe industries in Quebec through protective tariffs.”

(in Montreal)

talked of a probable "backlash." He thought that English Canadians, having been "deprived" of part of their country, would "naturally" refuse to deal with a "separate" Quebec. Someone in Winnipeg echoed this view, explaining that English Canadians would be unable to forget that Quebec had turned its back on their "willingness to compromise." In Regina, St. John's and Edmonton, people spoke of the "trauma of amputation." The péquistes are "dreaming" if they think that "stupidity" or a "guilt feeling" will bring Canada to "swallow" association; if they so decide, Quebecers "shall have it cold, their separation"; we "would not be at all happy about dealing with a fully independent neighbour."

Let us not be "short-sighted," "naive" or too "emotional" about the whole issue, pleaded many speakers. A lot tried to remain objective. "What will be the [commercial] advantages of association?" some asked. Negative answers came from many quarters: "None"; "it holds no appeal for us at all"; "it is a shell game as anglophone Canada as a whole shares no common economic interests with Quebec"; "we [would] have no reason or desire to protect and buy at higher cost Quebec's manufactured products"; "it would be less advantageous to them than to us [Quebecers]."

Many speakers, particularly in Quebec and Ontario, were willing to accept the idea that eventually some sort of economic links could be negotiated. But they argued that the benefits would not be as great as the Quebec government expects. Bargaining would be long and difficult and the Quebec economy would deteriorate as negotiations went on; Canada would probably ask Quebec to relinquish some of the protection now enjoyed by her industrial sectors and to pay her share of the commercial and military costs of "defending" the economic association. The negotiated "package" would tend to be more advantageous to the stronger economy, that is, to Canada rather than to Quebec. The association could also be difficult to implement without some sort of political integration. A Quebec corporate manager summarized the arguments by telling the Commissioners that "the association would, if accepted, either be too weak to produce satisfactory results or would require numerous limitations on sovereignty."

Other speakers, both in and out of Quebec, particularly in Ontario and in the Atlantic provinces, presented opposite arguments. They spoke either of the "mutual benefits" that would accrue to both parties of the association or of the "serious loss" that would be incurred by both Quebec and Canada if formal economic links could not be negotiated. A Haligonian, referring to the issue as "a red herring," said that economic association was inevitable and desirable. He said: "The patterns of exchange and other human relationships between people on either side of the Quebec border are too deeply entrenched to be suddenly eliminated. What is more, any system of custom and tariffs would be considered too crude and difficult to enforce." On the basis of an analysis of commercial flow between Quebec and the rest of Canada, a Montreal business group argued that anglophone financial circles, out of sheer self-interest, would eventually insist that their political leaders conclude an economic association with a separate Quebec. The group commented: "Only such an association would guarantee the protection of the billions they have already invested in Quebec."

Introduction

"Please, gentlemen," implored a Vancouverite as he summed up his feelings about the national unity debate, "don't insult me by telling me that my problem is Canadian unity! It isn't! I need a job." Nor was his an isolated statement. Far from it. Over and over again, at the Task Force hearings, in all parts of the country, citizens expressed their concern about the present state of the economy and their fears for the future. Many implied, at least, that if Canada were to solve its economic problems, national disunity would disappear.

Chapter 14, "Governments and the economy," deals with such persistent issues as unemployment, inflation, the business climate, foreign ownership. It echoes the extensive criticism levelled by participants at the governments' management of the economy.

Chapter 15, "Regional economies," brings together the numerous comments the Commissioners heard on the problem of regional disparities, their causes, their effects, their persistence and the means available to reduce them.

Chapter 16 is on "Resources." Our economy is, to a large extent, resource-based, and in recent years the jurisdiction over resources has been the subject of intense debate between the central government and the provinces. This chapter reports particularly on how people view this conflict, but reviews many other problems of resources management as well.

Part III of this Report, "Quebec," covered most aspects of Quebec's relations with Canada as a whole, including the economic aspect. Accordingly, Part IV concentrates on how economic questions are perceived by Canadians residing in the other provinces.



"Why should I tell Trudeau my plan, if he won't tell me his?"

Background

The role of governments, in Canada and elsewhere in the world, has changed considerably over the last forty years. Prior to World War II, the public sector accounted for less than 22 per cent of the Canadian gross national product (the value of goods and services produced by Canadian labour and capital). In 1977, the equivalent figure was 41 per cent. The number of employees in the government sector, including hospitals and school boards, grew from about 250,000 to 1.8 million in the same period.

The growth of the public sector accelerated in the 1950s when political leaders responded very positively to a whole new set of popular expectations. As a result, governments in Canada nowadays have important and costly responsibilities in education and health, in leisure and cultural development, and intervene in matters as diverse as the quality of the air and the protein content of hamburgers.

Governments and stabilization

In addition to becoming a partner of the private sector in the production of goods and services, governments have assumed in our times the responsibility of ensuring that the whole economic system works smoothly enough, that jobs are available and that incomes are not eroded by rising prices. Governments attempt to do this by using all the powers at their command, particularly the powers to tax, spend and regulate. Their traditional approach in times of high unemployment is to increase expenditures, reduce taxes and make money easier to borrow. In times of rapid cost or price increases they take the opposite stance, spending less, printing less money and taxing more heavily. When both unemployment and inflation occur at the same time, as they do now, the going gets really rough!

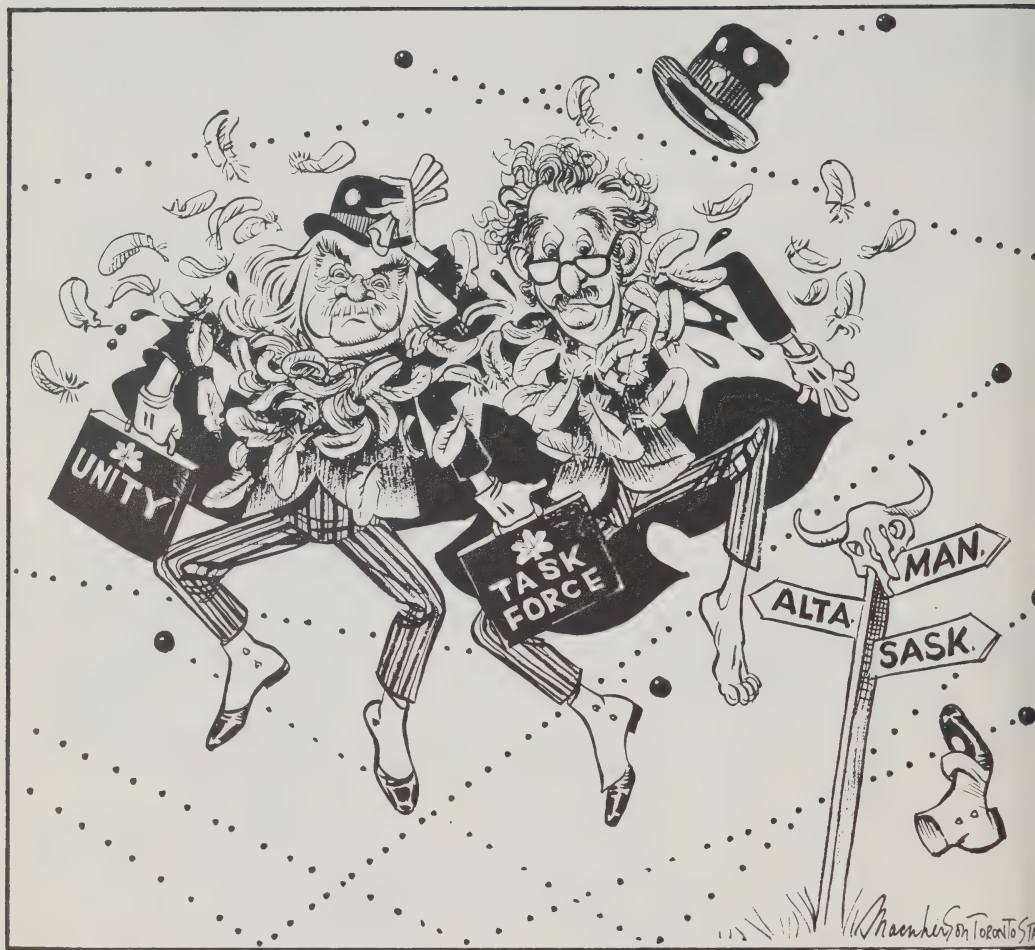
The following table shows that member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) — the "rich countries' club" — have had varying success in stabilizing their economies.

Unemployment and inflation rates in selected industrial countries 1975-77

Country	Unemployment rate* 1975-1976-1977			Inflation rate 1975-1976-1977		
Japan	1.9	2.0	2.0	11.8	9.3	8.1
United Kingdom	3.9	5.4	5.7	24.2	16.5	15.9
France	3.8	4.2	4.8	11.7	9.6	9.8
Canada	6.9	7.1	8.1	10.8	7.5	8.0
Germany	4.8	4.7	4.6	6.0	4.5	3.9
United States	8.5	7.7	7.0	9.1	5.8	6.5
Italy	3.3	3.7	7.1	17.0	16.8	17.0
Source: OECD, Economic Outlook — December 1977/July 1978						
* Based on national definitions.						

Stabilization in a federal state

In federal states such as Canada, economic stability has a constitutional dimension. The central government controls the major instruments of economic policy, such as money and banking, foreign trade and tariffs, and has nearly unlimited constitutional powers to tax. The provinces exercise control, generally speaking, over resources, intraprovincial commerce, and labour relations matters, and they also have wide powers to tax. Since the mid-1950s, partly due to transfer payments from the federal purse, provincial revenues have grown markedly, from \$1.8 billion to \$40.9 billion in 1977. This increase has been matched by a corresponding growth in provincial expenditures from \$1.8 billion to \$40.6 billion. Whereas in 1955 the distribution of total



government revenues stood at 60.7 per cent for federal, 22.3 per cent for provincial and 17.0 per cent for local, their percentages in 1977 were respectively 34.5, 38.7 and 17.4. The remaining 9.4 per cent is accounted for by hospitals and by the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans introduced in 1966.

Both the central and the provincial governments have, therefore, considerable leeway in countering economic instability. This division of responsibilities points also to the need for coordinating federal and provincial action. The objective is twofold: first, to avoid the pursuit of contradictory goals, and second, to ensure that central government policies take adequate account of regional differences.

Questions

What is the importance of economics in the national unity crisis? Should governments attempt to play a lesser or a greater role in improving the welfare of the population? Are the taxation and spending policies of governments adequately coordinated? Are regional differences taken sufficiently into account? Are job opportunities fairly distributed across the country? Which is more urgent: to fight inflation or to fight unemployment? These are some of the questions tackled by participants at the Task Force hearings.

“The Canadian people will be quick to detect and condemn any report which may fail to examine government [economic] shortcomings as a prime factor affecting unity in our country.”

(Manitoba Federation of Labour, in Winnipeg)

“We believe our members will agree that at the present time the main problem concerning Canada and Quebec is not of a constitutional nature. It is a bread and butter issue — to provide work for the people. This is to be done quickly through practical programs, not theories, taking into account all the circumstances existing in all the provinces and within all the regions.”

(Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, in Montreal)

“Unemployment and other economic problems may seem more drastic to us, but a separated Canada certainly wouldn't help things out at all.”

(in Vancouver)

“We feel that all these problems — of rising inflation, of threats to our standard of living, of unemployment and underemployment and limitations of personal and institutional freedoms pose in their separate ways threats to the unity of this nation in the same way the 'Quebec problem' poses a threat to national unity. Indeed, we suspect that these may be major factors underlying the Quebec problem itself.”

(PEI Public Service Association, in Charlottetown)

“We have heard a lot of people talking about the French language and preserving the French culture. I think that it is important, but there has been an over-emphasis on language and culture. We can only have language and culture as priorities if people have jobs, if people are able to pay their mortgages.”

(in Toronto)

“Once Quebecers feel they have nothing to lose by separating, anything might happen. Canadian unity, therefore, is closely related to the health of the Canadian economy. The advent of a nationalist government in the province of Quebec might be of very little consequence in comparison to the importance of economics in this matter.”

(from Pointe-Fortune, Que.)

“Let us stop talking about unity or separation or changes in the constitution. Let us work together for less inflation, less unemployment, less foreign ownership. These are the important things to the average man, whether he lives in Quebec or any other province. I would like you to take that message to Ottawa.”

(in Toronto)

“Canada is hopelessly overgoverned. In more simplistic days, the divisions of authority between the federal and provincial governments were reasonably well-defined. Today, virtually every provincial government duplicates to a greater or lesser degree those departments of federal authority which were established, or have been created, through Canada's development years.”

(The Better Business Bureau of Canada, in Toronto)

Opinions

Most economically-oriented groups and individuals appearing before the Task Force saw a direct relationship between the Canadian unity crisis and the present state of the economy. "Solve the economic problems and you will have solved the unity crisis," was one of the comments most often made. The reform of the Senate and the refinement of language policies, however important, were, in their estimation, secondary issues.

Participants had different and sometimes contradictory views about which specific economic problem had been the main contributor to the unity crisis. Indeed, every economic problem was identified as such by some among them: the inefficiency of big government; unemployment; inflation; over-regulation and government intrusion into the private sector; the lack of coordination between central and provincial governments; foreign ownership and control; inequality in the distribution of income; the lack of an industrial strategy; the low degree of citizen participation in economic decisions.

Government involvement

Few speakers called for a return to a *laissez-faire* philosophy of government. On the other hand, few wanted governments to increase their involvement in the economic life of the country.

When the question of big government was raised, it was not necessarily to claim that "small is beautiful." Generally speaking, it was to say that governments were duplicating functions, or charging too much for their services, or going about their business of governing without giving due consideration to "Mr. Taxpayer, who provides the money."

The failures of governments were said to be the greatest in achieving the economic goals of full employment, price stability, reducing foreign ownership and maintaining a healthy business climate.

Unemployment

"First things first," speakers at the Task Force hearings often insisted. "Unemployment is the number one problem today and if we don't solve it, our days as one united country are numbered." Words such as "psychological damage," "disillusionment" and "alienation" were used to describe the effect of unemployment on the lives of individuals and their families.

When Canada offers the "hope of secure employment" people will start believing in national unity. It is impossible, some participants said, not to look "pessimistically" at the whole issue of Canadian unity "when you don't have a job." The Task Force was warned that if "frustrated young men and women," the ones most affected by unemployment, are "left in the street," they will resort to joining "radical political organizations" as the only way to vent their frustrations.

In the Atlantic provinces, speaker after speaker deplored the lack of jobs. A Halifax resident complained that Nova Scotia's unemployment rates are sometimes 50 per cent higher than the national average, while wages are often 20 to 30 per cent lower. Newfoundlanders told the Task Force they were "sick and tired of begging for handouts." Some observed that only a "few measly jobs" were being created despite the abundant fisheries, forestry and mineral resources of the island. A demonstration by the unemployed took place in St. John's, on the occasion of the hearings, to support this view.

Many speakers in Quebec saw the Parti Québécois victory as the consequence of a deteriorating employment situation and of an apparent indifference on the part of governments. Unemployment was described as the major problem in the province. "If we want things to go well for Canada, we must, first and foremost, put Canada back to work," the Task Force was told in Montreal.

Westerners' views on unemployment were similar. A few of them were also upset by the influx of unemployed easterners who "drift" into the western provinces and "steal jobs from western

“Today, Newfoundland, and other provinces like her, faces an added threat. Unemployment is skyrocketing, the per capita debt growing ever larger, and resource development is stagnating. But, to the decision-makers and opinion-mongers crowded around the Peace Tower, all that is something of a joke, far beyond the scope of anything that matters. Why worry about a few 'down east baymen' or a handful of prairie 'hayseeds' at a time when the very unity of the nation is at stake. Just delegate a couple of low level civil servants to come up with a few make-work programs to keep them happy during the winter. After all, this is no time to be constructive, we have to worry about national unity.”

(The Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Development Council, in St. John's)

“The real problem is unemployment and the dehumanizing and degrading poverty that results from unemployment, fought only by the government's constant promises that amount in total to nothing.”

(in Vancouver)

“The primary source of the present crisis is . . . the failure of successive federal governments to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of Canadians. All sectors of the country are continuing to suffer from a growing economic crisis. In the east, workers see their traditionally basic industries — mining and fishing — slowly disappearing. In the west, there is a legitimate sense of economic discrimination resulting from such matters as distorted freight rates and an ad hoc energy policy. Throughout the country, even in prosperous Ontario, unemployment increases month by month. . . . Yet no legitimate alternative is forthcoming from the federal government.”

(Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, in Toronto)

“Job-creation programs are necessary and can be successfully done in any given Indian reserve in Manitoba. Eighty per cent of my fellow Indians are unemployed, and it is not by choice. Special consideration must be given to improve this area.”

(Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, in Winnipeg)

“Our crisis is economic, with a million people unemployed. As far as the Task Force is concerned, I do not refer to them as Keith Spicer did — 'the travelling circus' — but if you had come out here with ideas as to how to revitalize our economy and some ideas as to how to create jobs, I would have welcomed you with all my heart.”

(in Vancouver)

“As in other sparsely-populated, but resource-rich areas of Canada, we suffer — first and worst — the consequences of unemployment and 'government restraints.’ ”

(The New Democratic Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, in St. John's)

“The east coast fishermen, the Quebec textile worker, the Ontario steelworker, the prairie farmer, the B.C. lumber worker will all begin to care about national unity and to work for national unity when Canada offers the hope of secure employment, a decent home, social security and a better life in both economic and non-economic terms.”

(Vancouver Centre New Democratic Party Federal Riding Association, in Vancouver)

youth." It "causes social and economic problems," they observed. Others, on the contrary, saw those migrants as providing very much needed skills.

While it is Atlantic Canada that suffers the most, unemployment was seen as a problem in every region: "Even in prosperous Ontario, unemployment increases regularly," said a Toronto resident, referring mainly to the northern part of the province, "yet no legitimate alternative" is forthcoming.

The "biggest employers" in disadvantaged regions were said to be unemployment insurance and welfare assistance. Although judged to be necessary, the current unemployment insurance program was seen by some commentators as "often abused" by people who "work the limited time required to qualify for benefits, then refuse to take any other jobs."

Some concern was expressed about those "people pushing" to do away with the compulsory retirement age. The consequence was that "lots of job openings for young people will be closed off."

While one provincial premier, Mr. Bennett of British Columbia, and many business and labour spokesmen said that all governments must share the blame for the present high rate of unemployment, the central government was generally viewed as having a major role to play in correcting the situation. But Ottawa was seen to look at the problem from a "national perspective," where high levels of regional unemployment were obscured by the national average, a less dramatic figure. Furthermore, central government stabilization policies, designed to alleviate unemployment in the country's industrial centres, had the effect of increasing the misfortune of the disadvantaged regions, some speakers believed.

Inflation

After unemployment, most participants at the Task Force hearings called inflation the country's worst economic ailment. It was having an extremely bad effect on the morale and unity of the country. "A fraud," "a crime," "the most subtle mode of taxation yet devised," were expressions used to describe inflation.

Wage and price controls were said to have failed at keeping prices and incomes in line. They have failed because the "anti-inflation belt was too elastic," according to a Montreal participant. Many agreed. A Nova Scotia labour group maintained that the major causes of inflation, "housing, energy and food costs," were not affected by controls. Other participants included profits in that list. A Winnipegger was quite bitter about the "exemption" of Crown corporations and utilities. "If ever there was a thing that needed to be controlled, it is the outrageous extravagance and bad management in those organizations." The results of it all, said a Toronto labour group, echoing many others, have been "restricted paycheques but uncontrolled inflation and the strengthening of the privileges of the rich."

Not only have controls "failed to stop inflation," said another group; worse, they have engendered "hardship, bitterness and disappointment." They were variously labelled by a great diversity of individuals and groups as totalitarian, divisive, anti-constitutional, undemocratic, inequitable, economically counter-productive and, because they fostered the "separatist ideology in Quebec" and exacerbated "feelings of regional alienation," they were repeatedly said to have been damaging to Canadian unity.

All labour representatives who attended the Task Force hearings chastized governments and business for putting the blame for inflation on "labour's aggressive wage demands." In Winnipeg, one group argued that any charge of "unpatriotism" would have been more appropriately addressed to employers who "stage a strike against the nation by discontinuing or retarding plant production and by withdrawing investment capital." The Marxist-Leninist groups agreed: their denial of the "exploited labour class's responsibility for inflation" was vehement.

Some representatives of labour and community organizations commented on the particularly difficult situation of those on fixed incomes in times of rapid price increases. A Toronto association of pensioners told the Task Force that older people are deeply concerned about inadequate

“Had the government assumed the sweeping powers it took for itself when it passed the so-called Anti-inflation Act in 1975 and used those powers [instead] to combat unemployment, to build the homes people require, to establish important social benefits that would lift up the economic conditions of those who have so much less in our country, then perhaps federalism would work. But the government assumed those powers, not for the interests of the majority of the people in this country, but actually used those powers against their interests. The results were restricted paycheques, but uncontrolled inflation; a strengthening of the pillars of privilege for the richest in the country and more unemployment for the weakest.”

(United Steelworkers of America, in Toronto)

“Canadian workers were accused of causing inflation, of being inefficient producers, of aspiring to live too high off the hog. . . . Canadian workers were accused of being unpatriotic, ironically so, when prices and profits bore little brunt of the controls program, when plant capacity continued producing at a rate of only 82 per cent, when production was being cut back and investment capital was seeking more lucrative profit return from areas beyond our Canadian border.”

(Manitoba Federation of Labour, in Winnipeg)

“Besides reverting to the question of the efficiency of the [controls] measure itself, in order to fight inflation, it has been rightfully reasoned that this legislation was dealing with a problem in Ontario and it ignored the problem of unemployment in Quebec. Besides, this legislation has been a deterrent for the underpaid workers to catch up with their salaries, in addition to dangerously deviating from the collective bargaining process.”

(Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, in Montreal)

“...Nor shall we forget the measures of the Trudeau regime in attacking the working class through the notorious freeze on wages.”

(in Vancouver)

“I have great difficulty following the logic that paying people wages for productive work is inflationary, but giving them welfare or unemployment insurance benefits for doing nothing, helps stop inflation. This is the basic rationale of Ottawa's present economic policies.”

(in Winnipeg)

“Management ability is lower at the government-operated services level than in private sectors. Incentives for Canadians to work for the private sector . . . should be created. Controls on profits should be replaced by incentives to manufacturers. . . .”

(New Brunswick Industrial Developers Association, in Moncton)

“Unless the environment in Canada is attractive because of a competitive cost structure, lower taxes or some measure of protection that ensures attractive returns on investment, it will be very difficult to maintain Canada as an integral economic unit.”

(Canadian Manufacturers' Association, in Ottawa)

pensions, loss of savings and high taxes. "The majority are unable to live in a private home and are obliged to sell their houses and live in senior citizens' homes," said a New Brunswicker.

Many participants saw inflation as a symptom of economic distress, a reflection of the inadequacies of the free-enterprise system ("capitalism on its last leg"). Others referred to the government's lack of control over monopolistic forces. For different reasons, businessmen were also very critical of governments generally: "They have led the country to adopt an attitude of borrowing on tomorrow to pay for today," said a Regina group. Added an Edmontonian: "Governments have addicted us by the infusions of new money in the economy, by deficit financing." But putting all the blame on government mismanagement might be too easy, said a Haligonian: controls were a "utopian" exercise anyway, because inflation is a "world-wide" problem. A Quebec economist agreed: he referred to the controls program as "the utopian struggle against inflation."

Governments and the private sector

Many business groups emphasized that Canada's prosperity is closely linked to the success of the private sector. They advocated less government intrusion in the marketplace and a "renewed faith" in the private sector's job-creating capacity. "If business is not expanding, neither is the economy," said one business group after another, "and the whole country suffers."

As one participant put it: "Canadians no longer have a clear-cut vision of their economic system or of the fundamental principles of the free-enterprise system." "It is for the government," said one group, "to return business leadership to the private sector." Many speakers decried a trend towards more bureaucratic red tape and heavier taxation. Increasing government industrial assistance programs, said one, "does not make up for legislation that inhibits free enterprise."

Another speaker argued that private enterprise had declined "because people have been made to feel dependent on government policies." Even the business community was too inclined to look to government for answers: "The system is hindered by increasing government involvement, sometimes, unfortunately, requested by the business community itself."

All critical comments, did not, however, point in the same direction and not everyone was upset about the trend toward more government intervention in the economy. Many participants did not share the businessmen's commitment to the maintenance of an "unfettered" private enterprise system. For example, many community and labour group representatives, as well as unorganized citizens, supported government laws and regulations to "maintain an orderly marketplace."

Many speakers blamed business for the economic ills of the country. A Torontonian told the Commissioners that Canada cannot count on the private sector to solve unemployment because it is business that is "laying off people." Said another: "There is an Alice in Wonderland quality in the government urging the private sector to invest more when it cannot use all the plant and equipment it now has." New industrial development was needed. A stronger "leading role by government and less reliance on private enterprise" is the answer, he suggested.

"The crimes of the system are numerous," the Task Force was told by proponents of a new economic order. Some of them were: "corporations basking in the warmth of wage controls"; "firms syphoning off profits"; "employers closing down plants and blaming labour where management was at fault"; "multi-nationals exploiting our resources and leaving empty shelves like so many wooden shacks in the Klondike"; "Canadian capital leaving the country not because it was not making profits but because it can make more by exploiting the unorganized workers of Mexico."

Many speakers denounced the "influence" that corporations exercise on government decisions. Said one: "They mount multi-million dollar lobbies and flock to Ottawa to plead their case." Other speakers observed that ordinary citizens do not have the same "easy access" to government and accused politicians of "too readily bending under business pressure."

Critics of the private sector also accused it of investing in central Canada to the detriment of less developed regions in greater need of a boost. Some said corporations leave themselves open to

“It is thoroughly realized that in no way, shape or form can the Government of Canada create jobs for the tremendously high level of unemployment that exists today; there is simply not enough money available to any combination of governments to do so; but what can be done is that over a period of time, a reasonable business climate should be created so that small business in particular is not going to feel that it is persecuted to the point where it can no longer continue, or, alternately, never begin.”

(The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, in Charlottetown)

“Mass volumes of paperwork, bureaucratic red tape, and heavy taxation put a burden on the business community which makes it quite unattractive to expand and grow. If business is not expanding, neither is the economy, and the whole country suffers. The engine of democracy is free enterprise, fueled by personal initiative and freedom.”

(Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, in Whitehorse)

“We live in one giant company town from coast to coast. And [so] who can blame the Québécois for wanting a country that they call their own?”

(in Winnipeg)

“How can we ever expect to be unified in Canada when we consistently allow foreign corporations to dictate the path we should take?”

(in Vancouver)

“We may have strong nationalistic feelings about foreign investment in our country, but such investments, properly regulated, are powerful boosts to business. It has also been indicative of a healthy and stable business environment in Canada that she was viewed by investors, such as the United States, as a good area for expanding free enterprise.”

(St. John's Board of Trade, in St. John's)

“Many people find it appalling to discover that Canada is probably more than 60 per cent mortgaged to other countries and to multinational companies. It has become apparent to some of us, that the democracy which is purported to exist here in Canada is nothing but an impotent facade, a colony of the multi-nationals.”

(in Whitehorse)

“Our political leaders must cease to bend over backwards for the multinational companies because they are contributing to the disunity within our country in order to control us.”

(New Democratic Party, Quebec Branch, in Montreal)

“We cannot afford to waste our time and energy arguing about past history. The present and the future cannot be held in abeyance while we argue about a vague concept of “national unity.” Talk is good and we must have discussions, but at some point talk has to stop so we can get some action on inflation, unemployment, new railway equipment, pollution, land use, better health facilities and better education.”

(Manitoba Pool Elevators, in Winnipeg)

“Canada desperately needs a long-term, macro-economic national industrial strategy. What we have instead is precisely the opposite: economic chaos, rampant unemployment, and certainly even worse prospects for the future.”

(in Edmonton)

charges of "unpatriotism" by overlooking these regions, and are just as guilty as government for regional disparities. And "what about the great corporations that pull up stakes and move out of Quebec?" asked a Montreal participant, who added: "They are wrecking the country."

Foreign ownership and control

The question of foreign ownership and control of large segments of the Canadian economy drew a great number of comments, some of them very passionate, in all regions, from business as well as from labour circles, from ordinary citizens as well as from "experts." One labour participant said: "There is something sadly amusing about the spectacle of premiers and prime ministers who have fallen all over themselves to sell out Canada's economy to multi-national corporations, now preaching nationalism and national unity." Said another: "We require democratic control over the disposition and amount of investment to prevent repetition of the Sudbury story. We require repatriation of control over our economy so that Canadians can become their own economic masters."

In Winnipeg, the Liberals were accused of having "given away the country piecemeal." "Who can blame the Québécois for wanting a country that they can call their own when the rest of Canada lives in one giant [foreign] company town," summed up another speaker. In Vancouver, the Commissioners were asked: "How can we expect to be a unified Canada when we consistently allow foreign corporations to dictate the path we should take?" In the Northwest Territories, the Commissioners heard strong criticism of the Foreign Investment Review Agency "still letting foreigners take over our business." In St. John's, some participants referred to foreign corporations who "come and rob the land and labour of Labrador." "The situation is dramatic," said an Edmontonian: "during the past five years, foreign ownership has grown by a greater amount than during the entire twenty-year period of the 1950s and the 1960s combined." And worse, he concluded, "over 80 per cent of that enormous increase has been financed by Canadian savings."

Though in a minority, some speakers approved of foreign investment. For one, the fact that Canada has been able to attract so much foreign capital should be a matter of "pride" for Canadians. Said a Newfoundland business group: "It is indicative of a healthy and stable business environment in Canada that she is viewed by investors such as the Americans as a good area for expanding free enterprise."

Other speakers invited Canadians to be realistic about the whole question. "We may have strong nationalistic feelings about foreign investment in our country," said an Atlantic provinces business group, "but let's not ignore that such investments when properly regulated are powerful tools to business." "We simply need our friends the Americans to assist us in developing our vast resources potential," a Toronto man stated. Others deplored the fact that foreign investment capital had slowed down recently. A Prince Edward Island business group blamed this on "wrong taxation policies." A national business group, present at the Ottawa hearings, blamed the political climate: "Investors' attitudes are depressed regarding our economic and political affairs and about our ability, as a nation, to find constructive solutions to our problems."

“To develop a clear-cut industrial strategy will require that both the federal and provincial governments enter into an industry by industry analysis of our strengths, weaknesses and potential in the resource and manufacturing sectors. Such an analysis must be done with the full involvement of industry and labour.”

(Dr. Stuart Smith, leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, in Toronto)

“Many of our problems are derived from a lack of clarity of purpose and organization that exists among the various levels of government and their relationship to the private sector.”

(The Business Council on National Issues, in Ottawa)

“If there is any real way that the provinces can have more input into both economic and cultural affairs, let that be done. There have been proposals made years ago and repeated several times since, e.g., having provincial input or consultation on foreign borrowing and its coordination, having provincial consultation on money supply and banking matters. There is nothing new in these proposals. Talking about them again may be worthwhile in itself.”

(Edward Schreyer, former leader of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, in Winnipeg)

“The vast borrowing and spending power of the provinces cannot be disregarded in managing the economy. Manitoba believes that the changes in the world and the national economies in recent years dictate the need for an innovative federal-provincial consultative process on economic matters.”

(The Honorable Warner Jorgenson, acting premier of Manitoba, in Winnipeg)

“We were a semi-industrialized country; we are becoming a semi-deindustrialized country... the Argentina of the north... All of Canada, including Quebec, faces brutal economic readjustments unless new forms of economic cooperation are adopted to halt the erosion of the country's economic position.”

(The Committee for a New Constitution, in Toronto)

“The Canadian Labour Congress has suggested replacing those tax cuts for the corporate sector with tax cuts for people who will spend those tax savings and help get the economy moving again. We agree. Substantial increases in old age security benefits would not only assist the aged but would increase demand as those needed dollars are spent.”

(Alberta Federation of Labour, in Edmonton)

“Removal of the controls program would lead to improved personal income growth, more consumer spending and a better investment climate... The program does little or nothing about controlling the major causes of inflation — housing, energy and food costs — yet has directly brought about a worsening of unemployment and regional wage disparity.”

(Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, in Halifax)

“The cancer of unemployment can be beaten, but not through the band-aid treatment of L.I.P. and Canada Works, and not by a government more concerned with the economic climate for business than with the mass of people in this country.”

(Newfoundland Association for Full Employment, in St. John's)

Proposals

Like the criticisms of the present performance of the Canadian economy, the recommendations on how to improve it touched all aspects of economic life. The areas most extensively covered were: government growth and stabilization policies, fiscal and economic cooperation between the central and provincial governments, the adoption of an industrial strategy, the regaining of control over Canadian industry and the taking into account of the regional impact of fiscal and monetary policies.

Growth and employment

Scores of specific measures were proposed by different speakers. Some were long- or medium-term: the development of a national and of regional industrial strategies; the Canadianization of the economy; an improved federal-provincial cooperation in economic matters; an increase in the processing of natural resources at home; the expansion of our international markets; the deconcentration of central government offices, etc. Some were shorter-term: the regionalization of central government stabilization policies; tax incentives to promote investments; tax cuts to encourage purchasing; limits on immigration; a home-building program; an "imaginative" tariff system to safeguard domestic industries; a guarantee that 75 per cent of the domestic market in textiles would be reserved to Canadian producers; the opening of free ports, etc.

Does Canada possess the ability to win the "war on unemployment" all on its own? In Edmonton, the Task Force was informed of the results of a recent study involving 1,100 Canadian companies which concluded that unemployment would not decrease markedly, even with a substantial increase in productivity and competitiveness. It was pointed out elsewhere that an effective strategy against unemployment would not be achieved without close cooperation with the United States, Canada's principal economic partner.

Federal-provincial fiscal and economic cooperation

Changes to the tax system and to federal-provincial revenue-sharing arrangements could help in solving Canada's economic difficulties, Task Force members were told. However, most speakers were suspicious of any major shift in economic responsibilities if this were to restrict the central government's freedom to act decisively in fiscal and monetary matters.

But there is room for improvement in the present distribution of government responsibilities, said many participants. For example, some experts recommended the development of federal-provincial mechanisms by which both levels of government could coordinate their interventions in the economy, i.e., foreign borrowing and the regulation of the money supply. Premier Davis of Ontario recommended the creation of a joint economic committee to allow "the legislatures and governments to act together in a systematic and concerted fashion on [Canada's] crucial economic problems." The acting premier of Manitoba, Mr. Jorgenson, told the Task Force: "Manitoba believes that the changes in the world and the national economies in recent years dictate the need for an innovative federal-provincial consultative process on economic matters." Premier Bennett of British Columbia told the Commissioners that the country needs an economic strategy, including a consistent and coordinated effort by all governments to reduce spending, and to encourage growth and confidence in the private sector.

Economic policies could be made more flexible than they are at present, argued a life insurance dealer in Toronto. He told the Task Force that, for example, even though monetary policy should remain under central government jurisdiction, its application in the different regions of Canada could be improved and do much to help alleviate unemployment and reduce regional disparities.

Many participants asked themselves how Canadians could ensure that general economic policies are not detrimental to regional economies without paralyzing the central government by the excessive decentralization of economic responsibilities. A Quebec City economist proposed the following approach: "There are two complementary ways to respond to the particular needs of each province: (1) the explicit taking into account by the central government of the regional influence of its own revenues collection and expenditures; (2) the involvement of the provincial

“Let us discard policies that hinder the dynamic free enterprise system that built the country.”

(Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, in Whitehorse)

“Private enterprise reacts very strongly to the economic, social and political environment. It is in a position to benefit from the considerable variations of this environment, while it is preserving its role as an efficient producer of wealth and employment, provided that it is a paying proposition.”

(The Canadian Manufacturers Association, in Ottawa)

“The basic aspect, of course, is the improvement of the economy. This takes a good deal of work and we will have to rely upon government action rather than the action of the private sector because the private sector is the one that is laying off the people.”

(in Toronto)

“Constitutional changes will really have no effect if economic power is able to establish growth and profit as the sole motive of a nation. We invite government interference into the market to protect the weak.”

(Calgary Interfaith Community Action Committee, in Calgary)

“We Canadians, proud to be the world's highest per capita traders, have been trading our nation out of existence. We great Canadian traders have had a current account deficit with the United States for forty-eight of the past fifty years and for every single year for the past thirty-two years. What we could do is stop the cancerous growth of foreign ownership in Canada. We could compel Canadian financial institutions to make more of their loans to Canadians and to areas of the country with poorer economic conditions. What we could do is regain control of our own future.”

(in Edmonton)

“Unless we get the country back from the multi-national giants and their lackeys in the federal government, unless we start getting competent, active government instead of window dressing, federalism will be rejected in Quebec.”

(in Winnipeg)

governments themselves in the stabilization process, general orientations being coordinated at the level of federal-provincial conferences." A Vancouver economist agreed: "Regional industrial strategies must be supported by other instruments of public policies, such as differentiated monetary, fiscal and commercial policies."

A speaker urged the creation of a truly national budget prepared by Ottawa in consultation with the provinces, with revenues being collected by the provinces.

Inflation

Compared to the criticisms raised against the central government controls program, precise proposals on how to fight inflation were few in number. From labour groups, the Task Force members heard that governments should concentrate on stimulating production rather than restraining consumer demand via a control on wages. For example, as part of an overall national economic policy, a Nova Scotia labour group urged "the lifting of the wage and price controls, the generation of higher consumer spending and major housing projects."

Conversely, some speakers favoured extending the controls program. The "middle-men, especially marketing chains," were the main target of some, representing particularly the labour movement.

Those who tended to blame governments for inflation recommended spending restraints and an end to "unproductive, wasteful government programs or services." Said an Edmonton resident, after equating the number of civil servants with government inefficiencies, "We need to get these people out of useless and unnecessary government programs and back into the productive work force."

Private sector

Most business groups who made presentations to the Task Force proposed placing more confidence in the private sector, especially in these troubled times. Canadians should be encouraged to work for the private sector rather than for government, said some. Jobs could be created in the private sector by replacing controls on profits with "incentives to manufacturers, not only to produce more than one product, but to produce more goods saleable as exports."

Governments should stop using tax monies to support Crown corporations which compete unfairly with the private sector, said a businessman in St. John's and a few others elsewhere.

Foreign ownership

Many specific measures were proposed to buy back Canadian industry from foreigners, among which were: tax concessions to firms that encourage their Canadian employees to become shareholders in their companies; publicity programs to encourage the buying of products from Canadian-owned companies; a more vigorous enforcement of the Foreign Investment Review Agency regulations; changes in the Bank Act to limit the access of foreign subsidiaries to Canadian savings.

Background

Canada is no exception to the rule that in most countries, human and natural resources are unequally distributed geographically. Indeed, economic and social indicators reveal that the well-being of Canadians differs markedly from one region of our country to another.

Uneven distribution of resources

The most common measures of regional disparities are the unemployment rate and the level of income per capita. When the Canadian average is taken as the base (100 per cent), the following indices of regional disparities (1977) are obtained:

Per capita income and unemployment rate as a percentage of the Canadian average for 1977

Province	Per capita		
	Personal income	Personal disposable income	Unemployment rate
	Percentage		
Newfoundland	68	70	196
Prince Edward Island	67	70	123
Nova Scotia	79	81	132
New Brunswick	75	77	165
Quebec	93	91	127
Ontario	109	110	86
Manitoba	93	97	73
Saskatchewan	92	94	56
Alberta	104	105	54
British Columbia	110	110	105
NWT, Yukon	96	96	N/A
Canada	100	100	100

Source: National income and expenditure accounts, 1963-77, Statistics Canada, catalogue 13-201. The Labour Force (December 1977), Statistics Canada, catalogue 71-001.
 These data confirm that the Atlantic provinces have the lowest levels of per capita income and the highest levels of unemployment. For example, the table shows that the unemployment rate in Newfoundland is almost double the Canadian average.

These data confirm that the Atlantic provinces have the lowest levels of per capita income and the highest levels of unemployment. For example, the table shows the unemployment rate in Newfoundland to be almost double the Canadian average. Nor is this phenomenon new. Statistics going back as far as 1926 indicate that apart from the lowest ebb of the great depression, when the "dust bowl" was ruining prairie crops, no region of Canada has at any time recorded as low a per capita income as the Atlantic region.

The concept of regional disparity

Not all notions of economic disparity are related to income levels and unemployment. Another factor of major concern in some regions is disparity in the degree of industrialization. A more diversified industrial structure, with less reliance on primary resources, is often associated with greater economic stability. On that ground, however, one could argue that Alberta is economically weak, as only 9 per cent of its labour force is employed in manufacturing, compared to 23 per cent in Quebec and 20 per cent in Canada as a whole.

Obviously it takes more than two or three factors to explain the phenomenon of regional disparity.



Besides unemployment, per capita income and the degree of industrialization, other economic and social variables come into play, such as the cost of living, the level of taxation, the productivity of labour, the rate of school enrollment, the quality of social services.

A recent study by the Economic Council of Canada (*Living Together*, 1976) shows, however, that no amount of "tinkering" with economic and social data can hide the fact that regional disparities in Canada are substantial and remarkably persistent in spite of the labour migration that has taken place over the years, and in spite of policies pursued since 1960 by both central and provincial governments to alleviate them.

Many Canadians told the Task Force that this persistence of regional disparities poses a very serious threat to national unity.

Questions

Are regional disparities caused mainly by differences in the endowment of natural resources? How does economic disparity affect the regional communities? Are disparities curable? Why do they persist in spite of the billions of dollars governments have spent to combat them? Have the wrong policies been used? Is there a "right" set of policies?

“Many Newfoundlanders are now wondering if we have exchanged one colonial master for another, i.e., London for Ottawa. Our general economic problem receives little consideration. Is it any wonder we wonder whether we are Canadian citizens or Canadian colonials?”

(in St. John's)

“A strong sense of economic grievance, real or imagined, is so ingrained that it has become part of western orthodoxy. From the very earliest days of Confederation — the opening of the west, the building of the CPR — western Canada has suffered under a national policy that has maintained the west as an economic colony of central Canada.”

(Alberta Branch of the Canadian Bar Association, in Calgary)

“Political pressure to create more jobs quickly has induced PEI's provincial government to engage in a sell-out into still further dependency and decline. A certain worship of outside corporations, as well as a lack of basic faith in the people, with most political decisions made in secret, remain the main features of provincial government policy.”

(in Charlottetown)

“The dominance of the Empire of the St. Lawrence has had serious consequences for this province and this region. Innovation has frequently been stifled; qualified manpower has been drawn away; profits have left the region in which they have been earned; local firms have been disadvantaged relative to larger central Canadian firms with vaster resources; capital has been scarcer; resources have been shipped out at increased prices or, if processed locally, made uncompetitive. After a century and more of this, is it any wonder that a sense of injustice should develop in western Canada?”

(Honourable Warner Jorgenson, acting premier of Manitoba, in Winnipeg)

“While phasing out industries may be big news if it happens in central Canada, such happenings are a way of life here.”

(in St. John's)

“One suspects that, despite intergovernmental transfers of federal revenues in attempts to offset regional inequalities of income, the interregional transfers of income and employment through tariffs and transportation costs have been detrimental to industrial development on the prairies. Rightly or wrongly, some people in western Canada feel that Confederation as it was implemented — and as it has continued to emerge — is an institution that confers the primary economic benefits of Confederation on the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.”

(in Regina)

“At this time, I have no intention whatsoever of commenting on our own economic situation as Acadians which, as always, is terribly depressed. You are no doubt aware that our main industry is social welfare.”

(in Moncton)

“I am saying that Ottawa had better pull up its socks, treat all Canadians alike, and try to doctor the feelings of discontent that exist in so many areas today — because we are forgotten by Ottawa, forgotten and ignored. If things persist, a complete breakdown of Canadian unity can be foreseen.”

(in St. John's)

Opinions

From the Atlantic provinces came blunt words that "little has been accomplished" in reducing regional disparities, "despite the spending of countless millions." From the prairies arose protests about being treated as an "economic colony" of central Canada ever since Confederation. In both regions a sense of alienation, of neglect, of playing second fiddle to the "central Canada" power structures, was expressed. But the causes of alienation are obviously somewhat different: in the west, generally, it is mainly because of the economic uncertainty that is consequent on the lack of secondary industry; in the east, this same problem is compounded by serious unemployment and lower than average incomes. In common is the feeling of not being "where the action is."

East meets west

In the Atlantic provinces, many speakers said that the inability of governments to alleviate regional disparities poses a serious threat to national unity. A "deep wedge" is being driven between the "have" and the "have-not" provinces, and this, rather than the separation of Quebec, could be the ultimate undoing of the country, the Task Force was told repeatedly. Said a Newfoundlander: "The government in Ottawa is going to have more than Quebec to worry about if it keeps ignoring the east."

Acadians were vehement in their reference to regional disparities. "Our main industry is welfare," said one. The French-speaking areas of New Brunswick have a "monopoly on unemployment," a woman from Caraquet told the Commissioners. A resident of Cap Pelé deplored that the youth of Acadia have to emigrate to Toronto, to "the States," and "even to Moncton," where they have to work in English and lose their language and culture. Through migration, Acadia bleeds. Stop this "bleeding" or "Acadia will die!" he said.

Throughout their east coast visits, the Commissioners heard the words "unrest," "victimized" and "short-changed" to describe the feelings engendered by disparities in income and employment between themselves and Canadians of other parts of the country. The Atlantic region was described as a "money sink." A Charlottetown participant complained that equalization payments have been "our pay-off for allowing others to run the country." Said one Newfoundlander: "Many among us are now wondering if we have exchanged one colonial master for another."

Inequalities that "strain Confederation" have existed for a long time and have often been explained to Ottawa, but explanations "appear to have fallen on deaf ears," Task Force members were told in Halifax. Causes of failure were said to include: lack of federal-provincial cooperation, poor and short-sighted planning ("every three years there is a new policy"), bad choices of projects ("millions invested in capital-intensive projects that create only few jobs"), inability to exploit the real economic potential of each region. Often criticized, too, was the "band-aid" approach to regional disparities. Make-work programs, such as winter works, do not solve the basic problem of an under-developed industrial structure.

Industrial development policies were called "inadequate" in both Atlantic and western Canada. The Task Force was told repeatedly that "national" policies have put their regions in a state of dependency. "Industry concentrates in central Canada," commented a Halifax resident, "while the areas that need investment to close the disparity gap are passed over." "Let's bring jobs to people," Commissioners were told. In Regina, a speaker condemned the interregional transfers of income and employment through tariff and transportation costs as "detrimental" to the industrial development of the prairies.

Many westerners were strongly critical of the movement of goods between the west and central Canada. They contended that western commodities are sold within Canada at world prices, while westerners usually must buy Ontario and Quebec products at prices above world levels because of the tariff protection provided to central Canadian industry. And why must the price of oil be controlled in the "national interest," Commissioners were asked, but not hydro-electricity in Ontario and Quebec? Other westerners wondered why they should "pay tribute" to a government 3,000 miles away. "Put simply, the west has had a bad economic deal," said a resident of British Columbia. Maritimers and Newfoundlanders, too, had great reservations about the protected

“Regional economic disparities are also prevalent here, not on the scale that can be found in the rest of Canada, but they do exist. You will find communities in the north which are economically more advantaged and more developed than others.”

(The Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, in Yellowknife)

“It would be tragic if regional disparity now became the issue that would bitterly divide Upper Canada from the east. It is already threatening to drive a deep wedge between the have and the have-not provinces. Can we develop a formula that may still keep us together?”

(in St. John's)

“While British Columbia recognizes that there are economic gains from being part of Canada, it must be recognized in turn that the whole range of federal policy initiatives, including fiscal policy, monetary policy, exchange-rate policy, commercial policy, transportation policy, DREE policies, and a host of others, have a different and often unfavourable impact on British Columbia. In failing to recognize this fact and take account of it, national policies initiated by the federal government have often adversely affected the economy of our province, and contributed to feelings of alienation.”

(Premier Bennett of British Columbia, in Vancouver)

“Western Canadians sell the produce of their labour on world markets; they buy what they consume, or the goods used in production, in protected markets. The cost of this — basing my judgement on studies done in British Columbia and in Alberta, and by the Economic Council of Canada — probably runs about \$500 per capita per year.”

(Gordon Gibson, former leader of the British Columbia Liberal party, in Vancouver)

“All marketing barriers inside the country must be removed. Transportation costs must be equalized. The inequality in transportation costs is an important factor in economic disparity existing in the country. It prevents development of large areas of Canada.”

(Sudbury Regional Multicultural Centre, in Toronto)

“We are opposed to the ‘user-pay’ concept within the context of our current uneven national development and the camouflaged manner in which the so-called user-pay principles are circumvented as in the case of the St. Lawrence Seaway.”

(Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, in Halifax)

“The structure of the tariff has not protected many of the region's basic industries. Rather, high consumer costs have been incurred throughout the region by the required purchase of protected manufactured goods from the rest of Canada. The restructuring of tariff rates at the time of Confederation favoured a central industrial core rather than the mercantile shipping economy of the Atlantic provinces.”

(Atlantic Provinces Chamber of Commerce, in Moncton)

“Transportation, which was viewed by the Fathers of Confederation as a means of developing all parts of the nation, has not done that. It hasn't helped to give Canada a better economic balance; rather, it has preserved the privileges of central Canada which began with the construction of the first canals at public expense.”

(in Edmonton)

central Canada markets. They said their fishermen and farmers had to purchase equipment from Ontario and Quebec at inflated prices, yet sell their own goods in a largely unprotected market.

Mainly transportation

It was obvious from the western part of the Task Force tour that national transportation policies are a major source of aggravation. Many speakers stated that high freight rates are an obstacle to the development of an industrial west, and thus contribute to the industrial predominance of central Canada. "More copper and rapeseed are produced in western Canada than elsewhere," said one westerner, yet the "processing for both is done largely outside western Canada."

Many groups in the maritimes also maintained that transportation policies act as a trade barrier and are detrimental to industrial development in their region. "Goods imported from Europe can be landed in Montreal at the same prices as they can be landed in Halifax," despite the fact that Halifax is "1,000 miles nearer to Europe," said one Haligonian. In Newfoundland, the central government was blamed for having allowed the CN to abandon rail freight service.

Almost all western groups who shared their concerns about regional disparities with the Task Force were adamantly opposed to "user-pay," a concept advanced by the central government that would, they said, make the customer of freight service bear the full cost. All thought that "user-pay" could have only one result: increased costs to western Canada. "It should not escape the notice of the pen-pushers beside the Ottawa River," said one Calgary resident, "that there is little competition in rail or road transport in the west." And if the central government could subsidize the St. Lawrence Seaway and air transportation, many asked, why could not a national policy be established that would take the regional differences of the west and the Atlantic provinces into account? Many easterners shared this view.

In Atlantic Canada, the Task Force heard that the governments of the "have not" provinces, under pressure to create jobs, have tended to "sell out" to outside corporations, and that their natural resources have been "exploited by foreign corporations." Some speakers regretted that their provincial governments had been willing to support financially unsound ventures in the illusory hope that they would create badly needed jobs.

While many wanted governments to adopt more effective strategies for regional development, a few felt, as one speaker put it, that if a region "lacks advantages, there is little point" in subsidizing its industrialization as this only prolongs the agony. Commissioners were quite frequently advised that no region could accomplish everything, nor was there the same potential for the same type of development in all regions. Specialization was of the essence.

In all parts of the country, most participants in the Task Force hearings agreed that new approaches to the problem of disparities were needed or Canadians would "lose patience." The poorer provinces feel they are being neglected, said a citizen in Halifax, while the rest of Canada is getting tired of footing the bill for federal development programs. A Vancouver participant agreed: B.C. had become a "welfare department"; "all these millions being taken away to finance the fight against regional disparities would be useful here" to diversify industry. Said a citizen in Calgary: "It is not possible to take wealth of that magnitude from Alberta and let it go to waste without impairing national productivity."

“The development of manufacturing in the west has been impeded by transport policies. Unless a ‘Trans-Canada Canal’ is built, it should not escape the notice of pen-pushers overlooking the Ottawa River that there is little competition to rail or road transport in the west. The huge subsidies and advantage of central Canada of the St. Lawrence Seaway should have their equivalent in western Canada and the maritimes.”

(in Calgary)

“What we want is more equality with the larger and more influential areas of Canada. Until this is realized, the feeling of unrest and of being short-changed in Confederation will continue.”

(in Moncton)

“We must have federal support. If it is denied us, we will remain poor, bitter and open to persecution by any noisy demagogue.”

(in St. John's)

“The Atlantic provinces don't want to be dependent upon handouts, and I believe Quebec and the other regions of Canada afflicted by economic disparity feel the same way. We want more than just to be kept alive. What we want is a stronger say in the decision-making process of this country. What we want is more equality with the larger and more influential areas of Canada. Until this is realized, the feeling of unrest and of being short-changed in Confederation will continue.”

(New Brunswick Telephone Co., in Moncton)

“Federalism could not exist without an equal sharing of the wealth among participants so as to readjust regional disparities. I am not saying that the federal government has to keep on spending within the provincial jurisdictions: rather, I am proposing that the federal government readjust such disparities by way of transfer of direct payments or income tax percentage points.”

(in Montreal)

“Disparities cannot be overcome via the equalization payment approach but rather by the development of an economic base and climate which will permit economic growth.”

(The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, in
Charlottetown)

“The only way to correct regional disparities is not by per capita handouts, but by the planned development of the natural resources and geographic advantages of each part of the country. If a part of the country lacks any advantages, there is little point in subsidizing its existence as it only prolongs the agony.”

(Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, in Whitehorse)

“Certain federal policies must be discontinued. An open example of this type of unfair treatment is in the recent decentralization of federal government offices. Our province, with the highest rate of unemployment in the country, did not receive even one of these decentralized jobs. How are we to react to such a policy? To expect anything more than jealousy, suspicion and resentment would be naïve.”

(Progressive Conservative party of Newfoundland, in St. John's)

Proposals

New anti-disparity public policies

"The ultimate goal must be to eliminate the need for fiscal transfer," said a group in Charlottetown. Many speakers in Atlantic Canada developed the same idea. Said one: "The time has come for Ottawa to base its fight against regional disparity on measures aimed at building and strengthening the industrial structure of the 'have-not' provinces, and to develop a climate that will permit economic growth." The Task Force was told that if government would invest on behalf of the public in private undertakings, resources could be processed to their fullest potential and complete products could be manufactured in the regions. Better federal policies should be implemented to encourage the decentralization of industry.

But it is not enough merely to encourage decentralization. "We should be seeking entirely new sectors" of business activity rather than furnishing "ever-increasing support" for non-economic ventures "whose demise may be inevitable in the long run." Instead, "let's promote the establishment of small, local industries suitable to our needs and location." For example, it was proposed that farm-machinery plants be encouraged to locate in Saskatchewan, that modern fish-processing plants be built in Newfoundland. This might require "long term taxation and other concessions."

Government policies should also aim at stimulating the expansion of plants already in operation. A Newfoundland high school student told the Task Force that a mill in Stephenville could have been kept open if the governments had acted. "Ottawa could have looked for increased international markets," he felt. On the subject of markets, farmers and fishermen in Atlantic Canada urged the Task Force to recommend improvements in the domestic and foreign marketing of their products.

It was not just greater decentralization of industry that was advocated; many participants wanted central government departments and agencies relocated to their regions. The central government should be decentralized also, the Commissioners were told, "to make it more sensitive to regional needs and aspirations."

New private sector attitudes

A government sensitive to regional needs would not suffice, however, if the private sector remained "central-Canada bound." Two Alberta economists suggested to the Task Force that the opportunities and the character of a region will be much better understood when the boards of companies, the line managers and the professional support staffs are all permanently settled in the area in which they make their living. Considering the crucial role that financial institutions play in economic development, the Commissioners were encouraged to support a policy that would foster their development under local management and control within each region.

Secondary industry needs to be developed in conjunction with the private sector, recommended a Nova Scotia labour group. Governments alone "cannot shoulder the burden of wealth distribution," said Premier Davis of Ontario; the private sector must be prepared, he added, "without either coaxing or arm-twisting" to develop an "adequate industrial infrastructure in the maritimes, even if it means lower rates of return on investment and assets." Said a Toronto citizen: "Profit is very important in the free enterprise system, but so is the unity and survival of our beloved land."

Some speakers were dubious about the private sector's ability to rise to the challenge. What about those "Canadian companies that prefer to invest in Indonesia before they would invest in Nova Scotia?" To "reduce and eventually eliminate" regional disparities is primarily the responsibility of the government, said a Nova Scotia labour spokesman. If the government does proceed via the private sector, it must ensure that public assistance "is closely monitored so that the taxpayers receive full value for their investment." The Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto stressed the need for the "maximum democratic participation of all Canadians" in the formulation and implementation of regional development programs and policies.

“Government cannot shoulder alone the burden of wealth redistribution; the private sector must advance into this area because it is right and ultimately in its own best interests.”

(Premier Davis of Ontario, in Toronto)-

“While Ontario and Quebec continue to dominate politics, our maritime premiers continue to search fruitlessly for an economic development policy within the region, [and therefore the problems of] Canada remain irrelevant to us.”

(in Charlottetown)

“It is true that certain parts of Canada do not have the same potential for development as do others but, nevertheless, we believe it is vital to give emphasis to economic development of those parts of Canada that have been described as the have-not provinces.”

(The mayor of Moose Jaw, in Regina)

“Regional development policies get changed in a relatively short run. Every three years there is a new approach and you cannot do anything in three or four years. You barely get started. We have an investment policy and a regional development policy which are heavily capital-intensive; we will get a lot of money put into the region, but very few jobs out of it. The region, in effect, is being used as a money sink, in that money is sent out there much the same as money is put in the United States, into a military program or space program. It is sent out into an area and then comes back to the centre of the country in terms of payments for imports of materials.”

(Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, in Halifax)

“We pump hundreds of millions of dollars into education only to see our most valuable resource of all, our young people, leave for jobs elsewhere. Occupations in the primary resources are not for them for we have taught them too well that to remain at home, to fish, to log or farm is synonymous with failure. We have taught them to be ashamed and that is the greatest tragedy of all.”

(Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Development Council, in St. John's)

“To develop a clear-cut industrial strategy will require that both the federal and provincial governments enter into an industry by industry analysis of our strengths, weaknesses and potential in the resource and manufacturing sectors. Such an analysis must be done with the full involvement of industry and labour.”

(Dr. Stuart Smith, leader of the Ontario opposition, in Toronto)

“The planning and development of all economic and social policies must be undertaken with the maximum democratic participation of all Canadians.”

(Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, in Toronto)

“Thus far, the federal government has not concerned itself with any comprehensive plan to help us develop our natural resources, or to promote the establishment of small, local industries which are suitable to our needs and our location. It would appear that it is far easier for the federal government to keep the unemployment cheques coming (and when these stop, to shell out welfare payments). We, in turn, are expected to be grateful for this great benefit of belonging to Canada.”

(Canadian Federation of University Women, in St. John's)

Short-term measures against regional disparities

Could anything be done immediately to mitigate the effects of regional economic disparities? Many maintained that it could. A new national transportation policy was proposed that would recognize transportation as an "instrument of regional and national development" and allow each region access to the whole market "at roughly equal costs to people and goods." The revitalization of the railway system would be an essential element of that policy, if a citizen of Charlottetown had his way. In St. John's, emphasis was placed on up-dating the Trans-Canada Highway and the ferry. In Halifax, it was proposed that "free ports" should be developed in several Canadian harbours to "encourage international trading companies to assemble, manufacture and distribute goods for specific markets without being subject to import regulations." The whole package would cost a "good deal of money, but over the long run it would be a good investment in people, a good investment in Canada, and a real contribution to national unity."

Another important element of this new transportation policy would be a revision of freight rates. Such a revision, the Commissioners were told, is required to make resource-processing profitable in the west and to ensure that freight rates no longer act as the "greatest impediment to western Canada's industrial development."

Freight rates were also seen in Atlantic Canada as a strong negative factor in economic development. "We have to price our commodities to meet the competition in central Canada markets and still provide for the transportation in that sale price," stated a businessman. In this context, talking about "user-pay" was adding insult to injury. Would subsidization of transportation be the answer? Why not? asked a PEI women's group; "a first-class letter is 14¢ anywhere in Canada." A business group in Charlottetown called for "a review of the all-too-numerous studies, reports and briefs" already done on transportation, and the implementation of those recommendations that "would have the most beneficial effect on the Atlantic region." But "no more studies, please!"

Selected changes in tariffs on foreign imports were also recommended as a means of stimulating local industry. For example, the Task Force was informed that such a move would greatly assist Atlantic Canada in expanding fish-processing. In Halifax, ship-building was said to be in need of government protection or further financial assistance, especially in view of the fact that the ship-building industry was heavily subsidized in most other countries. In Charlottetown, a group recommended that "import prices be brought in line" so that PEI's agricultural products will not be priced out of the domestic market.

During the present period of economic restraint, government money should be spent where it is most needed, that is, it should be used to bolster the poorer economies, and not so widely dispersed over so much of the country. The federal Department of Regional and Economic Expansion (DREE) ought to revise its policies to reflect this objective, some speakers suggested.

Other short-term ways of easing regional disparities were suggested to the Task Force. The thrust of these suggestions pointed to the need for the central government to apply its fiscal, monetary and other economic policies with due regard to their effect upon each region. As a group of lawyers in Halifax told the Task Force: "The constitution should clearly recognize the principle that national policies can and should often be applied with regional differences suitable to the different circumstances in the region."

Some speakers looked to constitutional reform as a way to solve regional disparities. The future of Canada lies in the extent to which the needs and aspirations of the regions "can be integrated through constitutional arrangements," the Task Force was told in Regina. The same idea was expressed in Moncton: the correction of regional disparity must be "guaranteed in the constitution." A group of lawyers in Halifax agreed: "There should be written into the constitution a clear statement of the principle of equalization, if not a formula for it." These experts warned the Task Force that it might be difficult, however, to arrive at an "equitable arrangement"; lengthy federal-provincial bargaining would be required before the principle of equalization payments can be entrenched in the constitution.

More recognition of provincial rights and powers does not mean that the people of the Atlantic

“We believe that with regions, as with individuals, success lies in the maximization of their particular strong points rather than in trying to overcome their weaknesses. We would recommend that regions be endowed with an industrial base which would be in harmony with the inherent advantages of each, rather than with enterprises which would do better elsewhere.”

(Canadian Chamber of Commerce, in Ottawa)

“Appropriate industrial strategies for Canadian regions should be formulated within a complex system of economic, political and social goals. Clearly, no region will have the resources to accomplish everything it may aspire to; however, choices can only be made after governments, industry and labour agree on the development and timing of an industrial strategy.”

(in Vancouver)

“In basic terms, the solution to the regional economic inequalities lies in the implementation of a strongly decentralized federalism or, at least, in a pure and simple control of the instruments of economic policies.”

(Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, in Montreal)

“A real problem has been the failure of economic policies to adjust to the Canadian scene. . . . It has become apparent that policies designed to fight either unemployment or inflation have a tendency to produce perverse results throughout the regions of Canada.”

(in Vancouver)

“Constitutional change cannot geographically relocate mineral resources, arable lands or fishing grounds. Canada’s density of widely scattered resources inevitably means economic disparities.”

(Canadian Institute of Religion and Gerontology, in Toronto)

“Regional disparities are characteristic of all developed countries. . . . In the United States, for the comparable period [1974], state per capita income varied from 118 per cent of the national average in Connecticut to 69 per cent in Mississippi. We do not deny that regional economic disparities. . . remain at thresholds of concern. However, in no sense does their existence deny this country’s successful economic performance. Most certainly it is no argument for dismantling Confederation.”

(in Edmonton)

provinces want to see a "pallid and powerless federal government," the Commissioners were told. The central government must maintain authority to provide the necessary leadership and to manage the economy to "ensure balanced regional growth." Said a Charlottetown business group: "We must maintain a strong central government. Too much autonomy to the provinces may tend to accent, rather than overcome, regional disparities."

Whatever happens to the constitutional distribution of government responsibilities, many participants told the Task Force that a better coordination of the activities of all levels of government is necessary if economic disparities are to be reduced. From Saskatchewan came the suggestion that a "process of developing an inventory of regional needs" should be set in motion. From this inventory would evolve a "more balanced regional development plan."

Background

Natural resources play an important role in Canada's economic life. Although the primary industries — agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining, quarries and oil wells make a relatively small direct contribution to the gross domestic product (the value of goods and services produced in Canada) — 8.3 per cent in 1977 — they are the basis of much of the country's processing and manufacturing sectors.

Regional variations

As the following table illustrates, the importance of each primary industry varies greatly from region to region.

Regional importance of selected industries as a percentage of domestic output and as per capita of 1977 gross domestic product

Industries	Canada		B. C. , Yukon & NWT				Alta. .		Man. / Sask. .		Ont. .		Que. .		Atlantic Prov. .	
	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$
Agriculture	100.0	259	3.9	92	20.1	638	39.1	1197	22.9	165	10.8	104	3.2	87		
Fishing	100.0	14	35.0	46	0.3	—	2.6	5	3.4	1	4.6	2	54.1	83		
Forestry	100.0	64	48.7	282	2.1	16	2.5	19	14.6	26	22.1	52	10.0	67		
Fuel — mining	100.0	228	9.0	187	83.7	2342	6.3	170	0.1	1	—	—	0.9	22		
Non-Fuel — Mining	100.0	115	13.0	135	0.7	10	14.1	191	38.1	122	21.5	91	12.6	152		
Hydro Energy	100.0	81	16.8	124	0.8	8	6.9	67	18.3	42	34.1	103	23.1	199		

Source: National income and expenditure accounts, 1963-77, Statistics Canada, catalogue 13-201 Survey of production, Statistics Canada catalogue 61-202

Because of the regional character of the geographical distribution of particular natural resources in Canada, the importance given at the Task Force hearings across the country to each subject and to each resource varied from one region to another.

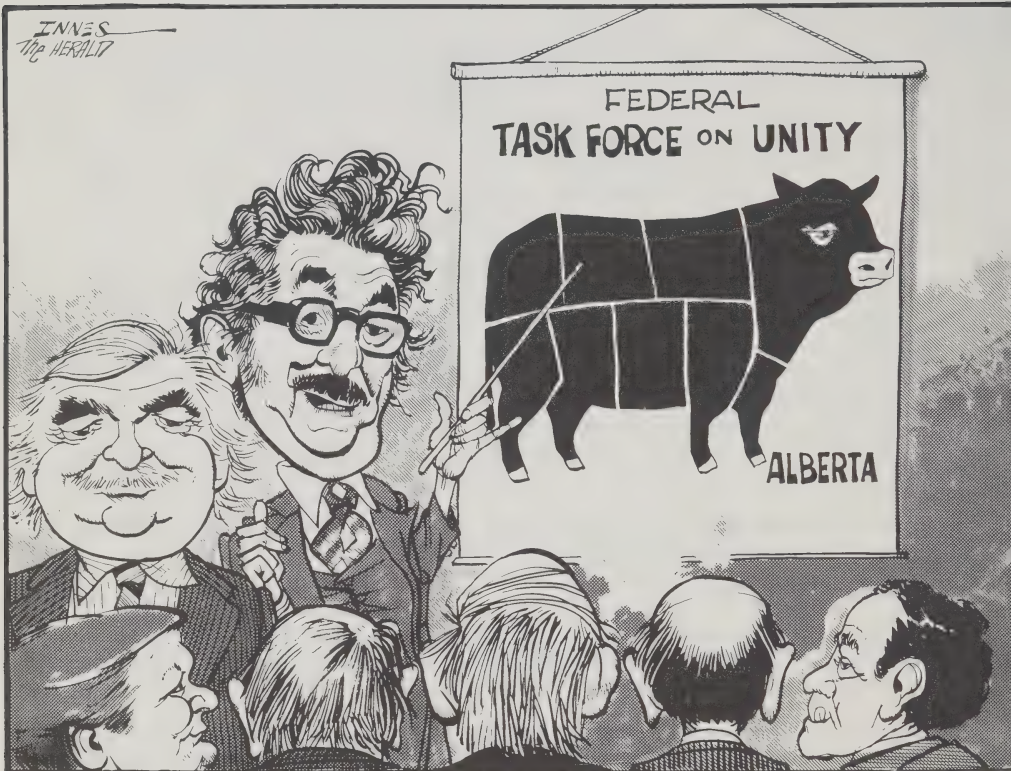
In a time of high cost and gloomy projections about the scarcity of certain natural resources, the issues of ownership management and taxation are of considerable significance to all Canadians. However, an Albertan, whose government draws more than half of its revenues from resource taxes and royalties, can hardly see things as does an Ontarian, whose government's share of revenues from natural resources is twenty-five times smaller and whose province relies heavily on raw materials and on energy brought in from other provinces or countries.

Constitutional debates

Special attention was also paid by participants to those natural resources that have been at the centre of jurisdictional debates between the central and their provincial governments. Fisheries were very much on the minds of participants from the Atlantic provinces, oil on the minds of westerners.

The Canadian constitutional distribution of government powers on resources is not an easy one to implement in practice. Under the BNA Act, the provinces have primary authority to regulate the use of natural resources, and power to tax directly for provincial purposes and to collect royalties.

INNES
The HERALD



"Ontario this is your unit . . . Quebec your unit . . . BC . . . Manitoba . . ."

The constitution does, however, constrain these provincial powers by giving the central government the authority to tax by any mode or system, to regulate inter-provincial and international trade, to declare local "works" to be of national importance, and by giving it an important role in fisheries and agriculture. Judicial interpretation has also recently added underwater resources on the Pacific coast.

The difficulties of reconciling federal and provincial responsibilities in the field of natural resources have given rise to numerous constitutional debates since 1920. The development of the OPEC cartel in the early 1970s exacerbated these conflicts. The two-price system for crude oil, the export tax on oil, the non-deductibility of royalty payments in federal taxation, the regulation of the rate of exploitation, the question of ownership of off-shore rights, to name a few, are all issues that were extensively discussed during the Task Force hearings.

Questions

How should the jurisdiction be apportioned between central and provincial governments in the field of natural resources? How should natural resources revenues be distributed? What role can the development and processing of resources play in alleviating regional disparities? Should exports of raw resources be limited in favour of domestic processing? Should foreign investment be discouraged? Are Canadian transportation and shipping facilities adequate?

“We have an abundance of natural resources of all types and description and what may in the future be even more important, room to move, room to expand, and room just to get away from it all.”

(Regina Chamber of Commerce, in Regina)

“It is necessary in our nation that each region has independence while having inter-related economic association with the rest of Canada. We refer especially to the necessity for provinces to have control of their natural resources.”

(The mayor of Moose Jaw, in Regina)

“The policies of the federal government penalize the resource-based economies of the western provinces in order to assist the industrial and manufacturing economies of central Canada.”

(in Vancouver)

“It is folly to proceed on the presumption that all differences arise in and flow out of Quebec and [that] to overcome the Party Quebecois 'ogre,' whether by peaceful or military means, is a solution to things. Such a presumption tends to disregard the variety of federal — provincial differences yet unsettled in each and every area of Canada. Specifically and for example, it would disregard the frustrations which at this time must be besetting the province of Saskatchewan, against whom the federal government has enjoined with potash and oil conglomerates to challenge rights which that province believes it does, or should have, in respect to resource taxation and resource development.”

(The Manitoba Federation of Labour, in Winnipeg)

“The offshore oil and gas? My stand is that it should be Newfoundland's.”

(in St. John's)

“Several provinces, especially western ones, have become concerned about their control of natural resources. During their 1976 discussions, the premiers unanimously demanded a 'strengthening of jurisdictions of provincial governments on taxation in the area of primary production from lands, mines, minerals and forests.' Several provinces have also been demanding jurisdiction over off-shore resources.”

(in Vancouver)

“This is the fishing centre of Canada; it should be the fishing capital of Canada. Ottawa has never seen a codfish.”

(in St. John's)

“The federal government has also used its tax powers to extend its control over resources within the provinces. Its control over the pricing of oil is an example of its intrusion into the resource area, which is supposedly within the legislative jurisdiction of the provinces.”

(in Vancouver)

“When Alberta's oil and gas became essential and expensive, the federal government said Canadians ought not to pay the going price. Premier Davis of Ontario said it was really his oil. God forbid that some day we should find such a resource, for the political power structure would tell us it is not really ours — it is central Canada's and they must have it cheap.”

(in Charlottetown)

Opinions

"We have an abundance of natural resources of all types and descriptions." "We are the envy of most countries in the world." Statements such as these from all across Canada show that Canadians are united, at least in their realization of the bounty nature has laid at their door. They disagree, however, as to how it should be owned, managed and controlled, and how its benefits should be shared.

The question of jurisdiction

In all parts of Canada, the Task Force heard that regional prosperity and resource development go hand in hand. Not surprisingly, therefore, most participants concluded that the provinces need to keep their control over resources. Some westerners found it hard to understand why oil prices had to be controlled "in the national interest" but not the price of eastern-produced resources and goods. They had support from a Toronto group who called the federal pricing of oil "an example of intrusion" into a matter that is "supposedly within the jurisdiction of the provinces." Said a participant in Charlottetown: "God forbid that some day we should find such a resource [oil], for the political power structure would tell us that it is not really ours — it is central Canada's, and they must have it cheap." In Vancouver, the Task Force was told that although natural resources have always been regarded as "at the very heart" of provincial jurisdiction, the central government "appropriates a large share of the increased revenue" now obtained from western oil. It does so by levying an export tax on oil sold to the United States and by taxing royalties paid to the provincial governments. Commented one participant: "Nothing similar has been done to resource or energy exports from any other part of Canada."

To explain the "sensitivity" of his province to issues affecting provincial control over resources, the premier of Saskatchewan, in addressing the Task Force, specified the important role resources play in the economy of his province: 22 per cent of total government revenue in 1976-77, compared to less than 2 per cent in Ontario. The premier of British Columbia commented that the economy of his province is also "resource-based and export-dependent to a degree that far outweighs" the situation in Ontario and Quebec. This fact, he said, coupled with B.C.'s "slender hold" on manufacturing and resource-processing, means that national policies have "a different impact" on British Columbia and "this is seldom recognized." A group from the same province blamed the central government for having designed economic policies since Confederation "to prevent the development of B.C. manufacturing so that B.C. would remain mainly a raw-material province." Similar complaints were heard in the prairie provinces and the Atlantic provinces.

In the Atlantic provinces, speakers made impassioned comments about their resources. "When we entered Confederation," said one Newfoundlander, "we did not come empty-handed." The fisheries, the "very heart of Newfoundland history," said another, "are controlled by a host of faceless civil servants and colourless diplomats" who "trade off" fishing stocks to achieve bilateral agreements. While many participants saw the 200-mile limit as a "step in the right direction," they wondered when the central government would initiate policies "to help us benefit from these great resources." Similarly, the Task Force was told that Nova Scotians "do not relish continuously holding out their hand to Ottawa when the resources [fisheries] are at hand to provide a prosperous future."

Despite the evident dissatisfaction of many participants with the central government's involvement in the resources field, Ottawa had its supporters. A Toronto youth group, for example, said the power of individual provinces "is too great" and all natural resources should be controlled by Ottawa. A Calgary inter-faith group said that the central government "should make sure there is sharing" and that prices are fair for all Canadians.

Jurisdictional conflicts, duplication of government regulations and uncertainties over which order of government is responsible were cited as detrimental to the harmonious development of Canada's resources. Said a Torontonian: "This country of ours, which prides itself on being a resource nation, is woefully lacking when it comes to any kind of national resource policy. The reason for this is fairly obvious: natural resources are a provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government [sticks] its oar in whenever it can."

“We find it hard to understand, for example, why the price of oil produced in the west must be controlled, in the national interest, but not the price of resources which are located in central Canada.”

(Premier Blakeney, in Regina)

“Newfoundlanders are getting fed up with being the migratory human fodder for the industrial core of North America. We are hard-working people who demand the right to work in our own province, developing and processing our abundant resources. Our fisheries, forestry and mineral resources would be the envy of most countries in the world, yet the only benefit that we derive from them is a few thousand measly jobs. There is no reason, for instance, why fish packaged in Boston should be on our supermarket shelves.”

(Newfoundland Association for Full Employment, in St. John's)

“Western farmers generally see themselves at the mercy of a central government concerned primarily about an industrial and consumer-oriented eastern society. Many western farmers perceive themselves as a market for over-priced industrial goods produced in a protected eastern market and as a source of cheap food sold on an unprotected domestic and international market.”

(in Calgary)

“For decades, federal governments have shown, by their neglect and their inaction, that the development of Canadian agriculture is not a priority goal. This is shown not just in farm policy matters. It extends through the realms of trade and tariff negotiations, taxation policies, industrial and commercial policy, manpower programs and transportation policy.”

(Ontario Federation of Agriculture, in Toronto)

“The fishing industry of Atlantic Canada, once a seemingly inexhaustible source of food and work for coastal area residents, today faces uncertainty and difficult times. Widely depleted fish stocks and the advanced technology of foreign fishing fleets, little concerned about the well-being of the Canadian industry, have threatened the very livelihood of our fishermen and their fellow workers in the fish-processing plants.”

(The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, in Halifax)

“PEI citizens are paying outrageous prices for electricity and fuel. They have to wonder if there is a national energy policy that would allow islanders to share in the bounty of this country.”

(Federation of PEI Municipalities, in Charlottetown)

“We must make in Canadian unity an overall safety-aware plan of research, development and implementation, incorporating all aspects of energy in the projected uses of nuclear, fossil, water, thermal, chemical, solar, wind and tide power available to us, and guaranteed in our constitution to remain for us first, and others second.”

(in Toronto)

The question of management

"There is no justification," the Task Force was told in Winnipeg, for the "relatively negligible" pace of energy development in all seven provinces east of Saskatchewan. There is a "fantastic concentration" of capital provided "to deplete" the country of those resources that are non-renewable but "perfectly storable," while renewable or extendable energy resources are left to "go wasted through non-use."

Hydro-electricity was a sore point with some speakers. One participant at the Montreal sessions asked why so much hydro potential is still untapped in Quebec. Our electricity costs are "out of sight," said groups in Halifax and Charlottetown. The Commissioners were also informed that an amount "exceeding" the total annual equalization payments from Ottawa to Newfoundland is flowing out of Churchill Falls in the form of "windfall profits" to Quebec. A previous Newfoundland government had forgotten to include a re-opener clause in its sales contracts with Quebec. "As a gift to Confederation, this is taking generosity too far," said a Newfoundlander.

From across Canada came complaints about agricultural policies. The premier of Saskatchewan said his province's "heavy reliance" on an export-oriented agriculture is subject to unstable market conditions. These produce "wild fluctuations" in the economy and cause the "booms and busts" which have haunted prairie people and their governments. Western farmers see themselves "at the mercy of a central government primarily concerned about an industrial and consumer-oriented eastern society." A Toronto group thought that central governments have shown by decades of neglect and inaction that the development of Canadian agriculture is "not a priority goal."

The "disastrous state of the mining industry," the "deteriorating conditions of our mines," the "improper management of our mineral resources," were expressions often used in statements dealing with mineral resources. International competition, lack of markets, shortage of capital, inadequate transportation facilities and federal-provincial conflicts over jurisdiction were given as contributing factors. In Charlottetown, a business group added that the policies governing the discovery, development and processing of the country's minerals do not make it a "rewarding endeavour" to those "few individuals" who have the "guts and temerity" to take the financial risks.

A northern Ontario resident said there was dissatisfaction in his area, "to put it mildly," with resources policies. Although "exceedingly rich" in resources, northern Ontario has been left with an "all-pervasive feeling of powerlessness." The region suffers from a "syndrome of one-industry towns."

The disadvantages of foreign ownership and control of resources were often invoked. In Nova Scotia, it was said that the profits of resource exploitation "have not fallen on the citizens"; they have gone largely to "foreign corporations" or, when spent here, have been used "to buy greater interests and prevent Canadian ownership." The present central government has "done nothing" to stop the "wholesale giveaway" of our resources, commented a Saskatchewan labour group. A Manitoba group asked if our economic difficulties did not stem from "the fact" that much of Canada's resource wealth is exploited by "multi-national conglomerates." The Task Force was warned that a divided Canada would leave Alberta "at the mercy" of oil corporations that currently "exploit our resources and people."

But not everyone saw outside influence over the economy in so bad a light. The mayor of Sudbury said that Canadians had to come up with resource-processing goals that take into account "our friend and neighbour to the south." The reason? To make resource-processing feasible, Canada needs larger markets, and the United States needs "certain items on our resource shelf." Other groups mentioned the impossibility of financing resource development solely through domestic savings, considering the huge capital outlays required and the "bleeding off" of Canadian investment money by non-productive government spending.

“Our electricity costs are ‘out of sight,’ as the saying goes. We share with our good neighbour New Brunswick the tremendous potential of the Bay of Fundy tides [whose] development would go a long way in solving the eastern Canada energy problem. However, as much as we need the jobs that this development would create, if no better deal was received for the people than was received by the residents of Newfoundland with respect to the development of Churchill Falls, the greatest benefit will be realized by another country.”

(Canadian Seafood and Allied Workers Union, in Halifax)

“We have a wonderful supply of resources and these should be developed sufficiently to benefit all Canadians. Depending on foreign oil, because it was cheaper, was a great mistake. When the price went up, as it was bound to do, the maritimes, in particular, suffered greatly. The maritimes could still have been mining their coal, enabling many to stay off welfare and pay less for fuel. When the pipeline was first proposed, it was a mistake not to let it go right to the maritimes, instead of cutting it off at Sarnia. . . . We should never put ourselves in the position of having to depend on other countries for the necessities of life.”

(in Calgary)

“Coal mines in Nova Scotia went under because of loss of markets while the Canadian government subsidized coal shipments from Pennsylvania to the Ontario Hydro.”

(Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, in Halifax)

“Policies concerning the discovery, development and processing of the various minerals of this country, so abounding in natural resources, should be of such a nature as to make it a rewarding endeavour to those few individuals who have the guts and temerity to take the financial and personal risks involved. This is particularly true when viewed in the light of the number of failures there are versus the number of successes.”

(The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, in Charlottetown)

“The present federal government has done nothing to arrest the wholesale giveaway of our resources and our productive capacity. Surely, if we are going to talk as a nation, we must begin to repatriate our economy so that it will operate in the interests of the Canadian people.”

(Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, in Regina)

“We are going to have to come up with resource and manufacturing goals and strategies that take into account our friend and neighbour to the south, the U.S. She needs certain items off our resource shelf, whereas we need markets for further processed resource materials and the opportunity to develop and sell high technological goods.”

(The mayor of Sudbury, in Toronto)

“The 200-mile limit was a step in the right direction; however, we wonder when the government, which in its wisdom imposed this limit, will initiate policies which will help us to benefit from this great resource. So far the fishing grounds appear to be protected mainly from Newfoundland fishermen.”

(St. John's Club of the Canadian Federation of University Women, in St. John's)

Proposals

On jurisdiction

Majority opinion favoured effective provincial jurisdiction over resources, coupled with provincial direction of future development. Heard often across the country were comments such as these: "there must be provincial control over natural resources"; "stop federal intrusion into resources"; "offshore oil and gas should be Newfoundland's." A Saskatchewan mayor told us that provincial control of natural resources is such a vital matter to western Canadians that recent federal-provincial conflicts have brought many of them to question the very value of the present constitution.

While the management of resources was seen mainly as a provincial responsibility, some participants, particularly in Atlantic Canada, favoured greater federal financial commitment to resource development. Ottawa must "prime the pump" and assist in providing the machinery to harvest "the full potential of the sea," the Commissioners were told in Atlantic Canada, and "we must have federal support," because the provinces have "scanty financial resources." The 200-mile fishing zone extension was applauded here as well, but further "logical steps" must be taken: for example, funding for freezer trawlers, marine mining vessels and ships to police the 200-mile limit are urgently needed.

On management

Many saw greater resource development as the answer to unemployment woes and regional disparities. The only way to correct regional disparity, said a man in Whitehorse, is through "planned development of natural resources." Developing our resources further would lead to a "substantial boost" in jobs and production, a Calgary group suggested. A speaker in Edmonton agreed, but warned the Commissioners that Canada must stop trading resources for "short-term capital-intensive projects," which employ "very few people" and "do nothing for our long-term economic development."

A better national energy policy was advocated in all parts of the country. In Halifax, a group advocated using "our fossil fuels and the Fundy tides as energy sources," and providing for a "hook-up with a national grid." This would reduce the dependency on non-renewable resources and on foreign oil that has led to the current energy price increases. "Substantial investment" in energy would "buy Canada's independence," a Calgary group said. It might also buy "Canada's unity," because a "reliable source of energy may well be a compelling reason for every province to remain in a United Canada."

The problems of farmers must not be overlooked, the Commissioners were reminded across the country. If farmers are to continue to prosper, Canadians "must pay more" for food than they do now. The national transportation policy must be reviewed to "assure that rail lines are not abandoned wholesale" and that the products of western farmers "reach the markets of the world." An Ontario fruit and vegetable growers' association said that task forces will not boost unity among Canadian produce-growers; what will do it is a "commitment to eat domestically grown products" and a federal "buy Canadian" policy.

Foreign control of our resources must end, said some participants at the hearings. "Surely, if we are going to talk as a nation," observed a Saskatchewan labour group, "we must begin to repatriate our economy" and "arrest the wholesale giveaway of our resources and productive capacity." A Winnipegger said that the influence of "multi-national, conglomerate decision-making" on the exploitation of Canadian mineral resources should be investigated. Why? To find out how much of our present economic difficulties "flow from the fact that much of Canada's natural resource wealth is not exploited from within." A few participants advocated public ownership of resources.

Back to jurisdiction

On the constitutional front, most of the proposals to the Task Force pointed to the urgent need to

“Of the economic problems faced by Canada today, the one which has been extensively influenced by an inappropriate distribution of federal and provincial powers and which will continue to restrict our potential for economic growth, is our failure to develop an effective industrial strategy. This failure lies at the heart of various trouble areas of our economy, including improper management of our energy resources, the deteriorating conditions of our mining industry, the inefficiency and uncompetitiveness of much of our manufacturing sector and the declining investor confidence in the future economic potential of this country. Duplication, overlap and contradiction between federal and provincial jurisdiction have led to confusion and large scale economic inefficiency in the allocation of society's scarce resources.”

(Ukrainian Professional and Business Club of Toronto, in Toronto)

“It should not be left to the courts to determine whether the federal government or the provincial government has the right to tax the resource industries and by what means. . . . In this regard, there should be called, immediately, a conference of first ministers to determine the manner [in which] resources should be taxed, whether through the federal arm of corporate taxation, the provincial arm of royalty taxation, or Crown corporations.”

(Ted Malone, leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal party, in Regina)

“The power of the individual province is just too great. . . . All of the natural resources of Canada should be controlled by the federal, not the provincial, government.”

(in Toronto)

“Labrador has a great potential for cheap hydro-electric power. This has been shown by the successful development of the Upper Churchill. Now, and in the future, the requirements for energy will grow. This project is too huge and expensive to be developed by just one government. If the federal government really wishes to make a significant contribution to the Newfoundland economy, it could immediately arrange with our government to develop the Lower Churchill.”

(in St. John's)

“Talk or task forces will not boost unity among Canadian growers of fruit and vegetables. A commitment by Canadians to eat domestically grown produce and a federal 'buy-Canadian' policy will.”

(Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, in Toronto)

“What is needed is the unification of the natural resources of Canada. Natural resources can unite the country economically, and, if used properly, can solve unemployment which is very high in Quebec.”

(in Regina)

“Whatever you write into the constitution — the division of tax revenues from resources must be settled by a fair compromise between the provinces and the Dominion around the table. Indeed, less scrapping and more productivity can satisfy both local and national needs.”

(in Vancouver)

end the "obscure" and "divisive" quarrels over resource management and taxation. It was proposed that it not be left to the courts, however, to decide which order of government has the right to regulate and tax resource industries. A conference of first ministers should do it. The Task Force was warned that the settlement of the issue should not ignore the role played by private industry; taxation should not make it difficult for industry to earn a fair return on investments.

Among the majority who supported provincial control over resources, some proposed amending the constitution in order to make it more difficult for the central government to infringe upon provincial rights. Mentioned as instruments of central intrusion were the unlimited power of taxation and the regulation of inter-provincial trade. One participant at the Edmonton hearings proposed a restriction on the central government's control over exports.

A few speakers were not prepared to allow exclusive provincial control of resources. For example, a Toronto group stated that "the natural wealth of this country belongs to all Canadians" and no province should be allowed to become a "greedy sheep." Avert this situation, they said, by placing resources under federal jurisdiction.

Introduction

The search for the best constitutional framework for Canada is one aspect of the debate on Canada's future. How important is it in the public's mind when compared to the social and economic aspects? How do Canadians feel about their constitution in 1978? Do they think it reflects today's realities and popular aspirations? Does it, in their view, require minor or radical changes? Does it require modification in its federal, its parliamentary features, or in both? Should there be more centralization of powers in Ottawa or more decentralization in favour of the provinces? Or does the resolution of current political conflicts simply require more conciliatory attitudes among politicians and the public?

A country's constitution establishes the principles, the structures and the processes by which it is governed. Canada's constitution is monarchical, representative, parliamentary and federal. (For a short description, see *Coming to Terms*, the Task Force's "vocabulary.")

In considering options for change from the present Canadian constitutional system, there is first the question of whether Canada should remain a federation or adopt some other form of union. The comments of those who spoke or wrote to the Task Force on the subject of sovereignty-association are outlined in chapter 13. Therefore, Part V concentrates on views expressed as to improvements that might be made to the present Canadian federation.

Whatever form of federation a country adopts, agreement must be reached on the distribution of powers, the composition and functioning of the central government institutions, the mechanisms of coordination between governments, and the method of amending the constitution.

Some Canadians believe that the existing institutions are good enough, flexible enough, to cope with present Canadian federal problems, given intelligence, imagination and goodwill. Many others feel the system would work better if regional interests were more strongly expressed, mainly through provincial governments, in the central institutions of the federation — in the Senate, the Supreme Court, the regulatory agencies — as well as in the federal-provincial conferences. Some Canadians also wonder whether sufficient account is taken of the Anglo-French duality in the organization and functioning of central institutions. Still others feel that a major revision of the distribution of legislative powers is necessary, particularly if Quebec is to remain part of Canada.

There are other issues too. Is the existing Canadian parliamentary system so satisfactory that it requires no modification? Would not a reform of the electoral process help correct some of the anomalies in the present pattern of representation in the House of Commons where, for example, the present party distribution of federal seats inadequately reflects the popular vote in some provinces?

And what about fundamental rights? Should they be entrenched in the constitution, making them impossible to change or to circumscribe by ordinary legislation? Should the process of entrenchment include language rights? Or should they be left to the final authority of Parliament and the provincial legislatures?

The Task Force heard many views on these and other constitutional subjects. They are presented here under the following headings: chapter 17, "The distribution of powers"; chapter 18, "Regional representation in central institutions"; chapter 19, "Protection of fundamental rights"; chapter 20, "Means of constitutional change."



Background

In Canada, as in all federations, two fundamental aspects of the federal system are the distribution or division of powers, and the mechanisms of coordination between the central and the provincial orders of government.

To achieve the proper balance of legislative powers between the two orders of government is the first fundamental challenge of a federal constitution. In fact, the precise distribution varies from one federation to another, depending on the objectives being fostered.

The distribution of powers

The distribution of powers in Canada, determined in 1867, was based on the principle that the central government should have competence in the areas of government activities of common interest to all Canadians, and that provincial governments should have competence in the areas of particular interest to the provincial and regional communities.

The distribution is effected mostly by sections 91 to 95 of the BNA Act. Most of the "enumerated" powers are *exclusive*: they belong to one order of government only. A few are *concurrent*, that is, assigned to both orders of government.

By section 91 of the act, the central Parliament was assigned thirty powers (including the residual power), giving it jurisdiction over matters such as trade and commerce, the public debt and property, direct and indirect taxation, defence, banking, currency, criminal law, navigation, penitentiaries, postal services, marriage and divorce, naturalization and aliens, sea coast and inland fisheries and Indians and lands reserved for the Indians.

By section 92, the provincial legislatures were assigned sixteen powers, including property and civil rights, direct taxation for provincial purposes, administration of justice, prisons, municipalities, maintenance of hospitals, management and sale of public lands, local works, and the power to amend their provincial constitutions except for the office of lieutenant-governor.

In a separate section, 93, education was specifically assigned to the provinces.

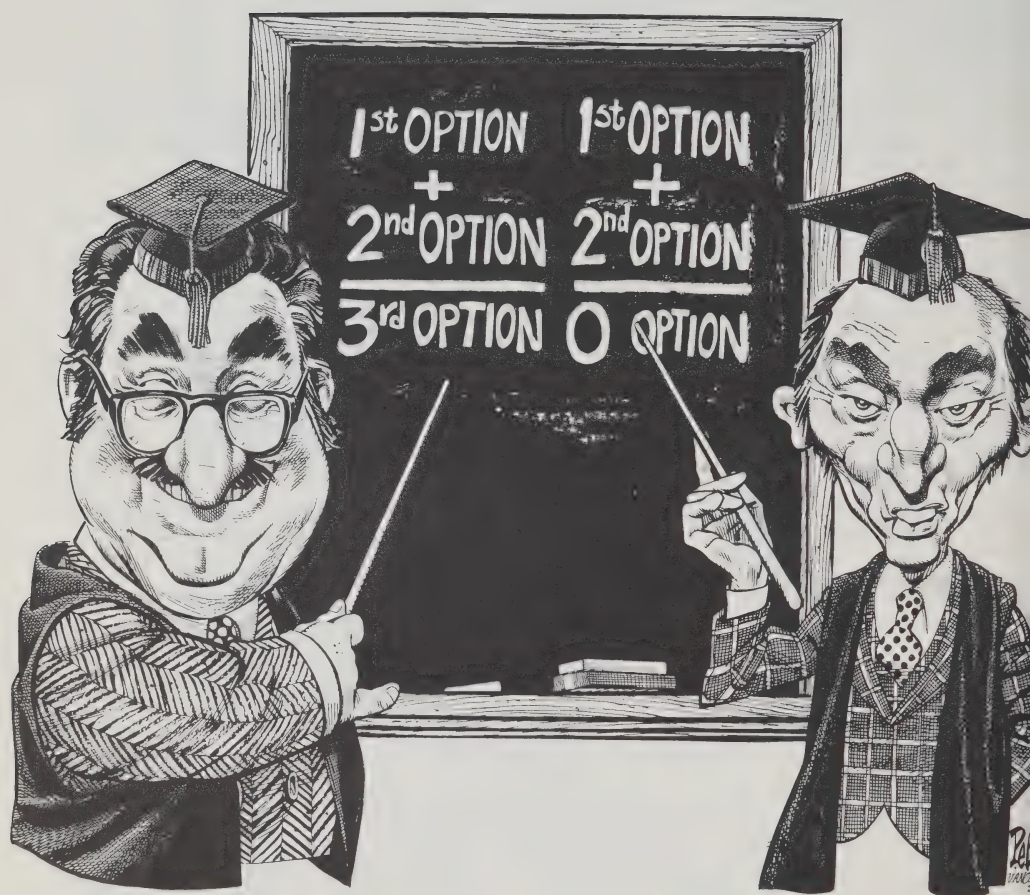
Section 95 of the BNA Act designates the concurrent matters of agriculture and immigration. In the event of conflicting federal and provincial legislation in these fields, the federal legislation prevails; this is described as *federal paramountcy*. In 1951 and 1964, old age security and supplementary benefits were added to that short list of concurrent powers (to become section 94A of the BNA Act) but in this case it was expressly stated that the provincial legislation would prevail in cases of conflict. This is described as *provincial paramountcy*.

By constitutional amendments, Parliament has been given additional exclusive powers, such as the establishment of new provinces out of the territories (1871), the representation of the territories in Parliament (1886), unemployment insurance (1940), the power to amend the constitution of Canada, with some exceptions (1949) and, by the Statute of Westminster (1931), the power to give its legislation extra-territorial effect.

The mechanisms of intergovernmental coordination

Although it has often been argued that in a federal system each order of government should be able to act independently within its own sphere of constitutionally assigned authority without any interference from the other order of government, in practice, the functions assigned to the two orders of government cannot be totally isolated from each other, especially in these times of growing government activity. Inevitably, and notwithstanding concerted efforts to prevent it, when two orders of government exercise authority over the same population and the same territory their activities will overlap and, on occasion, conflict.

The consequent need for effective intergovernmental relations has two dimensions: the relations between central and provincial governments and the relations among provincial governments themselves. In practice, a whole series of mechanisms has been established to facilitate



Semantic Conversion.

intergovernmental consultation and collaboration. Prominent among these are the federal-provincial and the interprovincial conferences. There have been many calls recently for improvement in the mechanisms for federal-provincial coordination.

For a fairly complete analysis of the federal system in Canada, the reader should turn to the Task Force "vocabulary," *Coming to Terms*.

Questions

Is the present distribution of powers between our two orders of government in Canada adequate or does it need clarification, adjustment or transfer of powers? Is the Canadian union too centralized, or too decentralized, or both, but in different areas? Could a different set of powers — special status — be allocated to one or more of the regional political entities?

“The decentralized nature of Canadian federalism is a myth and propagation of that myth serves the ends of demagoguery more than it corresponds to reality. Administration of the program of expenditures is often decentralized, but its planning and implementation are highly centralized.”

(in Quebec City)

“I know that this country cannot last very long the way it is now going. We must build a country, but one in which the provinces will be autonomous. . . . All the provinces want the same thing, they want to be able to decide and govern for the welfare of their people. The regional differences of this country are too great for it to be well governed solely by the central power; and besides, that would prove too onerous for its tax payers.”

(in Montreal)

“Quebec’s constitutional restlessness reflects a need of all provinces for a restoration of constitutional powers which have been extensively eroded by judicial and government action over the past several decades.”

(in Winnipeg)

“One of the greatest irritants in Canadian life is the “Ottawa knows best” syndrome that the rest of the country encounters almost daily. Ottawa does not always know best, and the fact that federal bureaucrats control such a disproportionate share of our national resources often restricts and distorts local and regional priorities and stifles initiative.”

(The Corporation of the City of London, in Toronto)

“Federal politicians have usurped provincial jurisdiction with their anti-worker wage controls. They have refused to recognize provincial rights over cable TV. They have tried to blackmail provinces out of their rights through such means as the insulation program and the decentralization program which required provinces to meet federal educational demands. Such actions have led to increased hostility to the federal government in all provinces, not just Quebec.”

(Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, in Regina)

“The reasons for the trend towards centralism in the last two decades are varied. There was an underlying philosophy in Ottawa, starting in the sixties and reaching its zenith in the early seventies, that for every problem that occurred in Canada there had to be a federal government solution. . . . The rallying cry of federal politicians in the years since Expo ’67 was that the Canadian government could achieve anything if it were given the tools. It could single-handedly create a just society with a plethora of progressive social legislation. It could unify Canada through institutional bilingualism. It could make Canada economically prosperous through an easy money policy and a little inflation. It could bring equity to fiscal measures through the tax reform and it could protect consumers through continuing intervention in the marketplace.”

(in Toronto)

“Federal institutions have too often disregarded the constitution and invaded provincial jurisdictions through the spending power. The present uneasiness comes largely from Ottawa’s abuse of taxing powers and from its excessive expenditures in fields of provincial jurisdiction.”

(in Montreal)

Opinions

At the Task Force hearings and in correspondence, many Canadians expressed dissatisfaction with the present Canadian federal system. The opinions of those opposed to the system itself and who would like to replace it by a confederal association of sovereign states, have been summarized in Part III, on Quebec. In the present chapter, the focus is on the comments of those participants who accepted the federal system but criticized its functioning and contended that the main cause of the problems is to be found in the distribution of powers between the two orders of government.

The need to "re-examine" the distribution of powers was generally accepted. Comments on this topic are dealt with in four broad categories of subject: the exclusive powers of either Ottawa or the provinces; the "essential powers" of the central government; the concurrent powers, that is, those which, by virtue of the BNA Act, come under both orders of government; and a number of "grey areas," embracing activities that are not clearly allocated to either order of government. Underlying all opinions was a continuing debate on the advantages and disadvantages of centralization and decentralization.

The spirit of Canadian federalism

A majority of participants at the Task Force hearings maintained that the distribution of powers and the use made of them have benefited the central government at the expense of the provinces and the municipalities. "What we have now," said a citizen in Edmonton, "is not classical federalism but "federal imperialism," a system which has transformed the provinces — "mostly the west and the east" — into "colonies of Ottawa." Another speaker called that system a "parent-child relationship." This, it was argued, is "the real problem of Confederation."

Some argued that the Fathers of Confederation wanted that kind of federalism, that the BNA Act was a "centralist act" that deliberately provided Ottawa "a large degree" of overriding control over the exercise of provincial powers. The central government's powers to appoint lieutenant-governors and to reserve or disallow provincial laws were often mentioned as two examples, among others, of the unitary bias in the original Canadian federal constitution.

To others, what the Fathers had in mind was a "loose" type of federation. They felt that "the spirit of Confederation" had been "gradually eroded," however, over the years. One Vancouverite said that the courts had provided the central government with a number of legal interpretation theories by which it has been able, "through unilateral action, to extend its control over matters otherwise provincial." These theories included the "wide interpretation" of the "peace, order and good government" clause of the BNA Act.

For many speakers it was primarily through its unlimited taxing and spending powers that the central government has significantly expanded the scope of its activities. A group from British Columbia said: "Parliament uses its spending power to buy provincial government cooperation in securing its objectives: the Trans-Canada highway, medicare and hospitalization, welfare assistance, etc." A citizen from Binbrook (Ont.), wrote that "it is difficult to find words for public use that properly describe Ottawa's abuse of its financial power and unique access to a rapidly growing income tax base, of its recourse to the monetary blackmail of tied grants." Similarly, a citizen argued in Montreal that "the present malaise originates largely from an abuse by Ottawa of its fiscal powers and from its excessive spending in areas of provincial jurisdiction." Others argued that the central government was also abusing its power in the area of natural resources. "Its control over the pricing of oil," argued a citizen in Vancouver, "is an example of its intrusion into the legislative jurisdiction of the provinces."

Many participants viewed the "centralist mentality" of federal politicians and bureaucrats as another factor working in the same direction. Said one: "Their actions for several years have been calculated to centralize power in their hands." Wrote another: "The federal government suffers from the belief that the provinces are incompetent and that the 'feds' can do a better job." The very imprecision of the constitution, its ambiguities and silences, were of great help to Ottawa: "We have an active interventionist federal government, moving in the grey areas of the constitution,"

“What’s the real problem (having said earlier that it’s not a problem between the French and the English)? I suggest that the real problem is how to govern the territory now known as Canada, to obtain the greatest common good; we obviously have not got that at the moment, so let’s look at what is wrong. First of all, I suggest the major problem is over-centralization of government. Canada is too big to be governed from one place in the middle of it, if it is, in fact, the middle of it.”

(in Vancouver) Charlottetown)

“What I mean to say is simply that I would like Canadians generally to be told what a constitution is and what are the limitations imposed on governments. As a youth, I am beginning to be confused by those who say that justice is a federal responsibility, while its administration is a provincial one — yet others claim administration to be federal. How can we understand anything? It is the same in municipal affairs, where we have a minister of municipal affairs in Quebec claiming such jurisdictions to be provincial, and yet there is a minister of urban affairs in Ottawa. How can we understand it?”

(in Quebec City)

“The federal authority should not become involved in provincial matters either directly or indirectly. Education, social security, health, housing, intra-provincial communications such as cable television, broadcasting, etc. are provincial matters.”

(Liaison Group, in Montreal)

“The federal government’s eagerness to interfere in local jurisdictions by virtue of its spending power is difficult to understand. One has the impression that the government is looking for unnecessary conflicts with respect to issues that are of no concern to it.”

(in Quebec City)

“Despite the fact that the constitutional impediments to effective government at the federal level were removed long ago, the courts continue to display a federal bias in their constitutional rulings which has already placed severe hobbles on the ability of the provinces to govern local matters effectively and in a distinctive manner.”

(in Winnipeg)

“It is essential that the federal government retain authority in such matters as external affairs, defence, banking, currency and monetary policy, and international and inter-provincial trade and commerce, and other areas where nation-wide policy and regulation is clearly required. Most other areas should be negotiable.”

(The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, in Toronto)

“The rights and responsibilities which are national in scope are the following: (a) defence and national security; (b) foreign policy; (c) overseas trade; (d) the free movement of individuals and goods from one province to another (except for special conditions required of immigrants); (e) basic human rights in Canada; (f) the sharing of natural resources throughout the country.”

(in Toronto)

“The national government must have sufficient power to deal with national economic problems and to ensure that giant corporations are not playing one province off against another in order to gain concessions.”

(Alberta Federation of Labour, in Edmonton)

observed a citizen in Regina. A score of others suggested that the intervention of the central government in shared areas, can be partly explained, as some put it, by "its aim — to make itself a strong and modern government," "imposing the same criteria and standards on divergent situations, places and peoples," "distorting provincial priorities," "usurping provincial jurisdiction, trying to buy provinces out of their rights through such means as the home insulation program" and other shared-cost programs. Other examples mentioned of Ottawa's "outright violation" of the constitution were numerous: wage controls, the regulation of western oil, gas and potash production, amateur sport, higher education, etc.

These federal "intrusions," some argued, have tended to undermine the Canadian federal system by "increasing hostility towards Ottawa in all provinces, not just in Quebec." "The phrase, 'maîtres chez nous,' is relevant far beyond Quebec borders," wrote someone from North Bay. Such intrusions, said Premier Alan Blakeney of Saskatchewan, are "bound to cause confusion, division and even doubts about the very legitimacy of our federal institutions." Canada has "reached the point where Ottawa tells the provinces what soup they should eat," deplored a Quebec City resident. "Confederation is being weakened beyond repair," echoed a maritime business group.

For other speakers, the most serious consequences of federal "intrusions" have been the duplication or overlap of costly government services which have been a source both of frustration for the public and fruitless political rivalries. To Senator Maurice Lamontagne, however, these overlaps are also partly due to the growing assertiveness of provincial politicians and bureaucrats: "What happens too often," he said, "is that the federal government has stayed in the areas where it had innovated and that the provinces have joined it there by the process of imitation." Whatever level is to blame, the end result, many speakers concluded, is the same: an "administrative jungle," a system "too complex for any ordinary citizen to understand" and "eleven governments all squabbling over our tax dollar and the right to govern us."

Pan-Canadian goals

Not so numerous, although equally eloquent, were the many speakers who approved of the legislative and administrative powers now wielded by the federal government. Many underscored the need to have a "strong, effective central government" to provide a "focal point." Ottawa, it was argued, must be free to act with authority where the "national interest" demands steps to meet "legitimate national goals."

Indeed, the Commissioners heard much passionate defence of the role of the central government. Canada, it was repeatedly said, needs "a strong unifying force"; without it, the country would "rapidly deteriorate"; could become little more than "a geographical expression, a splash on the map with a six-letter label," to quote Senator Eugene Forsey. The Committee for an Independent Canada spoke for many in declaring that Canada is "already one of the most decentralized states in the world." "Any further disposal of authority to individual parts of the nation," another group argued, "would simply further divide the nation" and "eventually mean disintegration and collapse."

Many speakers told the Commissioners that Canada must speak with "one central voice," particularly in economic matters. A group from Newfoundland warned that the federal government must "in no way be compromised in respect of its ability to undertake basic economic planning." A group from British Columbia said that Canadians can't "really support any appreciably greater devolution of legislative authority without risking the balkanization of the economy." Therefore, concluded a group from Alberta, we need a national government, with "sufficient power to deal with national economic problems."

Others saw a need to have a strong central government to provide "equality of opportunity and freedom of movement" for all Canadians. For example, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council argued strongly that to "pull the East out of dependency" will require a "strong federal government providing leadership [in] altering the present economic structure [and] changing the economic rules which have been in force since the 1920s." Still others, fearing that increased provincial autonomy would leave Canadians "with even weaker defences against the multinational corporations," stressed that only a strong central government could ensure "that giant corporations are not playing off one province against the other to gain concessions."

“We believe that Canada must have a strong central government which, through tax sharing and other arrangements, can provide equality of opportunity for all Canadians.”

(Canadian Pensioners Concerned, Ontario Division, in Toronto)

“The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce is strongly in favour of a strong and unified federal government, and we do agree that one of the essential powers of a central government is comprehensive taxing policies.”

(Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, in Charlottetown)

“Yes, by all means, solve the economic problems of the west and east, but for all Canadians to have equality and freedom of movement, keep a strong central government.”

(in Moncton)

“I strongly urge you to resist the pressures to dismantle Confederation by reducing the capacity of the federal government to marshal the full resources of this country in the interests of greater equality and the improvement of the well-being of this and future generations. I urge you instead to seek out ways of improving the sensitivity of the federal government to regional problems and its capacity to deal with them within overall national programs.”

(in Winnipeg)

“Canada without Quebec would be tragically impoverished materially, intellectually, spiritually. It would be an amputee. But Canada with Quebec, but with a central Parliament whose jurisdiction had been gutted, a central government whose organs had been paralyzed (for example, by making the Senate elected, or giving the provinces the power of appointment) would be a paraplegic. If I have to choose, which God forbid, I should choose the amputee.”

(Senator Eugene Forsey, in Ottawa)

“I do not see how one can really support any appreciably greater devolution of legislative authority, without risking balkanization of the economy.”

(in Vancouver)

“I sense a strong alienation towards the governing institutions. Frustration and resignation are widespread. I think our levels of government are squabbling over our tax dollar and the rights to govern us. Quite frankly, I see no advantage to unity by distribution of powers to provincial and municipal governments. I think there is a much better chance of unity in this country with a strong central government.”

(in Yellowknife)

“Constitutional discussion must entail a re-examination of federalism with a view to making the federal system more responsive to and representative of regional interests. The federation believes that, whatever the results of these discussions may be, the Parliament that will continue to be Canada's must be a parliament that is in no way compromised in respect of its ability to undertake basic economic planning in our country.”

(Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, in St. John's)

Proposals

Across the country, various participants championed some of the principles that should govern any distribution of legislative powers. Most often mentioned were: a clear delineation of responsibilities; efficient delivery of services; flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances; recognition of the country-wide responsibilities of the federal government; and "balance," that is, neither order should be too strong nor too weak. Many speakers indicated which specific legislative powers they felt should be allocated to each order of government. For the sake of clarity, their diverse and often irreconcilable views are regrouped here under a number of broad propositions: (1) Canada needs an effective central government; (2) provincial governments should be more autonomous and have greater powers; (3) the closer governments are to the people the better, and, in that context, municipal governments should be treated as partners of the two senior governments; (4) all orders of government should work in harmony.

Needed: an effective central government

A citizen from St. Anne, Man., wrote that "whatever we do with the distribution of powers, whatever road we take to respond to regional alienation, we should not render the federal government an impotent figurehead." "Keep a strong central government"; "resist the ploy reducing the capacity of the federal government to marshal the full resources of this country in the interest of greater equality"; "there is a much better chance of unity in this country with a strong central government," said others in Moncton, Winnipeg and Yellowknife.

Nobody who discussed the distribution of legislative powers denied that in a federal system there are things that can be done better at the centre. But there consensus stopped. The Task Force heard many definitions of "the essential powers" of the central government, of "those powers which cannot be taken as a whole, or even in part, from the federal authority" without "doing serious harm to its economic strength." Most speakers who emphasized economics thought that Canada should maintain and even strengthen its economic union.

Most often listed as "essential" federal powers were fiscal and monetary policy; international and interprovincial trade and commerce; equalization; foreign affairs; defence and "the raising of sufficient revenue to support such services." And "other areas where nation-wide policy and regulation is clearly required," added the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto. These powers, argued the Canadian Polish Congress in Toronto, "are the nucleus of . . . unity and the Canadian nation as a whole." To deal with matters which are "common to all Canadians," added a citizen in Calgary, "certainly a solid federal government will be needed."

Some insisted that "Ottawa" should also assume authority over areas not now, in their opinion, clearly assigned to it. "Immigration and communications simply have to have ultimate federal authority," said an association in Vancouver, "because of the inherent nature of their subject matter." The same was said about culture and communications, areas in which total provincial control would lead to "balkanization and inequality of opportunity and of service provision" — and even to "ideological constraint." Education was also seen by some, mostly among the representatives of the minorities, as an essential power of the central government. "Education is a national problem," contended a citizen in Moncton, and therefore "should be a federal responsibility." A more Canadian curriculum could be developed and Canadians made more aware of their history and identity (see chapter 9). Finally, as already reported in chapter 16, some felt the same rule should apply to natural resources; only the central government could ensure that resources would benefit all Canadians.

Those who felt this way were generally opposed to any reduction in Ottawa's spending or taxing powers. One of the "essential powers" of the central government, maintained the Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce, "is its comprehensive taxing policies:" it must use it "effectively to redistribute financial resources to compensate for divisive regional disparities." The central government, claimed a citizen in Regina, "should not opt out of conditional grants in health and welfare." Finally, a group in Moncton argued that Ottawa must make "a firm commitment" to equalize economic opportunities and to ensure a minimal standard of public services throughout the country. Equalization should be "protected within the constitution so as to

“Quite frankly, I see no advantage to unity by a distribution of powers to provincial and municipal governments. I think there is a much better chance of unity in this country with a strong central government.”

(in Yellowknife)

“As in our modern times education is a national problem, education should pass into the hands of the federal government.”

(in Moncton)

“The federal government should seriously, and soon, re-examine the path it has taken lately into fields that were intended to be provincial property. The provincial governments, for their part, should take another look at areas in which advanced technology has made outmoded the insistence on local or regional jurisdictions.”

(in Montreal)

“...more power should be ascribed constitutionally to the provinces, plainly because they are much closer to the people than are the federal authorities in Ottawa. Because Canada is so big, it necessarily embraces many disparate, often misunderstood elements. More power residing in Ottawa in an attempt to address and redress the resulting grievances is not the answer.”

(Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in Ottawa)

“...western Canadians are receptive to the prospect of constitutional change, and are likely to push for a substantial devolution of power to the provinces. The political and demographic situation in the prairies makes devolution the only realistic option for westerners to pursue; it is also an option that is clearly congruent with the expansionist tendencies of public bureaucracies in the prairie provinces.”

(in Calgary)

“There are certain federal powers, for example, the power to make laws for marriage and divorce, which were based on historical considerations which no longer prevail. These would be logical candidates for transference of legislative authority to the provinces.”

(in Vancouver)

“We believe that it is sufficient to limit the scope of federal powers and that the courts should not favour a broad interpretation of federal powers when the interests of the provinces, and their legislative authority, are affected. Since the power distribution is already balanced heavily in favour of the federal government, this will merely help redress some of this imbalance.”

(in Vancouver)

“...there are areas where some decentralization is not only possible but also plausible, and will improve the position, and meet the aspirations of the provinces and their people. Those areas [are] communications, social welfare, housing, and so on. Local governments will be able to perform those tasks much better than one central, federal body, which usually is too far away and out of touch with local people to perform them according to the true needs and to the true advantage of villages, towns and people living there.”

(Canadian Polish Congress, Inc., in Toronto)

guarantee that no citizen would be deprived of fair opportunity," advised an expert in Toronto. The Task Force was urged by a Winnipegger, "to seek out," in place of decentralization, "ways to improve the sensitivity of the federal government to regional problems" (see chapter 20).

Needed: stronger provincial governments

"Canada," said someone in St. John's, "is too big a country to be governed from one place in the middle." The Independent Alberta Association summarized the views of quite a number of participants when it said that "the time has come for the central authority to recognize that the citizens of each province desire more freedom and autonomy . . . so that their own unique aspirations may be realized."

For a Montrealer, to increase the power of the central government would contradict the principle that the "lines of communication between citizens and government must be as short as possible," that is, between those who levy the taxes and those who pay them.

Some speakers said that the idea that government in general should respond to regional aspirations for more self-expression and greater accountability should be treated as a "non-negotiable" principle and "protected against any further federal infringement." What about those fields which have already effectively been removed from provincial control by federal "intrusion" or "sacrificed" to the central authority? Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick believed that it would be healthy for the country if they were restored to those provinces "which desire to resume them." Many other speakers agreed; the Task Force heard such expressions as: "give their pants back to the provinces"; "hands off"; "restore to the provinces the constitutional powers which have been extensively eroded by judicial and federal government action." A Toronto professor advised "a gradual move to classical federalism, involving decentralization."

One of the ways to ensure decentralization would be to limit the "overriding powers" of the central government. Most often mentioned in this category were the unlimited spending power ("which should be curtailed to prevent intrusion"), the peace, order and good government provision ("which should be limited so that the federal government cannot unilaterally suspend the powers of the provincial governments"), the declaratory power (which should not be used without the consent of the province or provinces concerned), the power to appoint lieutenant-governors ("a dead letter issue now, but which used to be taken very seriously") and the federal power to reserve and disallow provincial laws (which should be taken away "once and for all"). Two political scientists in Vancouver concluded: "The existence of [these powers] is an expression of the assumption that the provinces are subordinate . . . and inhibits the development of a true federalism."

Many went further, and recommended that most of the powers in the "grey areas" be allocated to provincial governments. They constituted, many said, an impressive list of jurisdictional fields now open to negotiation: culture, energy, manpower, environment, consumer protection, language, correctional services, securities and urban affairs. Professors in Montreal and Quebec had still longer lists. Some speakers recognized that many "grey areas" such as communications would continue "by necessity" to be exercised concurrently by both levels of government. Often, however, speakers advocated provincial "paramountcy." The alternative — a clear transfer to Ottawa — would simply not be "realistic," said a political scientist in Vancouver; it would be "anathema to Quebec and unacceptable to most English-speaking provinces."

Some favoured an expansion of the scope of provincial activities in areas now clearly under exclusive central responsibility and which they felt should now be exercised in cooperation with the provinces: international affairs, interprovincial trade, indirect taxation, the management of the economy, the declaratory power and the residual power. Those in favour of such an extension of the "shared areas" or the "concurrent powers," did not generally indicate how this should be done, or which order of government should have "paramountcy." International affairs was one exception; those who endorsed a provincial input in treaty-making and international conferences generally qualified their proposals by such expressions as "limited jurisdiction," "framed" by the central government, "in areas of provincial jurisdiction."

“The continental shelf sea bed and sea resources should belong to the adjoining province. The right to travel on the sea should remain a federal matter, as should the sea bed and sea resource rights outside the continental shelf limits (where applicable) out to 200 miles.”

(in Calgary)

“Immigration should be under provincial jurisdiction. Provincial control over immigration would help Quebec ease its immigrants into its peculiarly unique French-Canadian society.”

(in Regina)

“Constitutional reform in Canada should be directed toward a cutting-down and thinning out of federal and provincial governmental apparatus. For example, the creation of new bureaucracies which are unnecessary, such as the provincial departments of higher education, should not be justified by jurisdictional disputes, and the setting up of “coordinating” agencies should be accompanied by the slimming down of existing ones. It seems foolish, for example, to employ hundreds in the Council of Maritimes Premiers, while the civil services of the three provinces continue to expand. Our eleven governments, including the legislatures, could be cut in half and they would give better service and get along better with one another. 24 million people cannot be adequately productive if administration takes too much talent and too many resources.”

(in Calgary)

“Every province and every community has its unique background and aspirations. None should be given, within our federal structure, any particular advantage in treatment or status over another excepting the development of a federal framework within which we can all work toward the fulfillment of those aspirations.”

(Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, in Regina)

“It is commonplace to recognize that some special arrangements will always exist within Canada. It is perhaps imperative to recognize that Quebec is a distinct collectivity for whom particular accommodations must be made. If other provinces wish to share them, well and good. Who would have it otherwise?”

(Stephen Lewis, former leader of Ontario New Democratic Party, in Toronto)

“In a political sense, we believe it desirable that for Canada as a federal country, institutions should be altered to assure adequate regional input into whatever decisions are taken by the national legislative body. A number of alternative means of accomplishing this have been put before you in this and other meetings. We would emphasize that if political institutions need to be better tuned to the requirements of a Confederation, so do economic institutions. From an economic point of view, the existence of a nation depends upon the power to raise revenue and to regulate the money supply. Other economic authority may be delegated constitutionally to a provincial government but the possession of fiscal and monetary power is necessary to nationhood.”

(in Edmonton)

“We want a constitutional formula which will enable all levels of government — local, regional, provincial, federal — to have a direct access to adequate sources of revenue to meet the requirements of their administrative responsibilities.”

(The mayor of Granby, in Montreal)

Finally, various participants approved giving the provinces exclusive or paramount authority in such fields as regional economic development, immigration, marriage and divorce, and fisheries.

Among those participants stating the case for a transfer of legislative powers to the provinces, some, like the *Fédération des syndicats du secteur aluminium*, argued in Montreal for "differentiated decentralization," different degrees for different provinces. In chapter 12, similar opinions were reported when debating the pros and cons of giving Quebec a "special" or a "distinct status" within the Canadian federation. The arguments that the distribution of powers need not be the same for all provinces was not, however, only centred on the need to respond to the "specificity" of Quebec. Indeed, many speakers reminded the Commissioners that "we are distinct regions," that "we must create a Confederation which would allow for particular provincial differences and needs," "that some special arrangements will always exist within Canada" and that "all provinces cannot be treated the same way." A professor in Calgary summarized the debate by saying "special status for each and every province is something that has existed de facto for a long time. Changes to our constitution should facilitate diversity and experimentation with alternate public policies within regions and provinces."

The Task Force was often told that any increase in the legislative authority of the provinces would have to be accompanied by a redistribution of the sources of fiscal revenues. A group in Montreal spoke for many in arguing that a revised constitution "must anticipate a fiscal balance corresponding to the responsibilities assumed by each order of government." A citizen in Vancouver added: "Changes in the taxation power would be most appropriate for some provinces, while unconditional federal money could be made available to other regions."

On the matter of conditional grants and other financial assistance to the provinces, the Task Force heard a variety of views. Some regretted the lack of control over federal grants. In Halifax, Moncton and Ottawa, for example, the Commissioners were told that provincial autonomy in the administration of federal grants to universities may "balkanize" higher education. Francophone groups said the lack of central government control was partially responsible for the fact that funds provided for minority-language instruction had not always been put to their intended use.

Yet many groups and individuals maintained that there should be no "strings attached" to federal transfer payments, that when Ottawa attaches conditions, it effectively "upsets" provincial priorities and "blackmails" the provinces. To a Toronto correspondent, these grants carry a very clear message: "You [the provinces] can do whatever you want, but unless you do what we [Ottawa] want, you can't have this money, much of which was collected from taxpayers in your province." Many participants said the poorer provinces are often "compelled to shape their own programs to attract some federal money."

A group in Vancouver summed up a popular view when it said: "Everyone seems to agree that conditional grants are undesirable, but who can resist the temptation?" To give more legislative powers to provincial governments, it was argued, would not alter the situation. And what we need particularly, said a few participants, is to "redraw provincial boundaries to reinforce the weaker provinces." To the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, "better-balanced provinces [are needed] so that the weak provinces would not run to Ottawa and invite the federal government to expand its constitutional authority." Many opposed this idea, saying that provincial boundaries had overriding social and historical roots.

Needed: efficiency, closeness to the people and good local government

Many speakers argued that any redistribution of power should be based, as much as possible, on the principle of "efficiency." "Another source of malaise," maintained a Quebecer, "is the high degree of inefficiency and high costs of the central government structure." No country, argued a group from Charlottetown, can have "a long-term hope of survival where government is appropriating, through taxes, about 43 per cent of the gross national product." Any new constitutional arrangements must take into account the "benefits and costs to Canadians."

Some believed that the costs of government could best be cut if all government decisions were made at the local and regional level "unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the interests of the

“Because of this total lack of proportion between autonomous tax revenues and jurisdictional spending responsibilities, economic management of public funds is dangerously inefficient at the federal level, which holds all the budgetary strings. . . . The tax imbalance should cause those who say that Canadian federalism is decentralized to have second thoughts.”

(in Quebec City)

“The taxing and the spending power of Parliament should be thoroughly revised. . . . The levers of fiscal power now manipulated by the federal government should be made more responsive to regional, provincial and municipal needs.”

(in Edmonton)

“Canada is, after all, a collection of regions. It is imperative, therefore, that the federal government recognize that we are distinct regions and then strive to make Canada work by allowing those regions to maintain and capitalize on their own identities within the embrace of Confederation.”

(St. John's Board of Trade, in St. John's)

“We need a true federation, one in which the interests of all the provinces and regions are represented and respected. We need to maximize the control that each of these regions has over its own destiny so that in the end it will be able to make its unique contribution to the nation. To continue along the same centralizing path — increasing the scope, powers and control of the federal government — will lead, not to political unity, but instead to political disunity.”

(in Vancouver)

“To stay together, Canada must be prepared to drift apart. More autonomy must be granted to the provinces and in turn to the regions and municipalities. Like a good marriage, Confederation must allow for spaces in the togetherness of the partners.”

(from Toronto)

“Federal-provincial disputes are quite disruptive to our stability. I suppose here, I call for greater respect for each level's responsibility and less blurring of their activities, unless they are clearly and truly cooperative ventures.”

(in Winnipeg)

“... the fields of responsibility of both levels of government should be re-examined and re-defined in order to reduce the possibility of overlapping jurisdictions.”

(in Montreal)

“You've got too much government. I worked as a civil servant, I know the conflicts that come when the provincial department and the federal department [who] are trying to do the same job, disagree. I look at the rising tax bills worth 42 per cent of the gross national product. There's much too much of it and I think that's part of decentralization too.”

(in Vancouver)

“The federal bureaucracy must be wound down and many of its functions transferred to locally controlled administrations. The federal government should be a facilitator, not a regulator — small departments should be set up to help the provinces achieve things they cannot achieve individually.”

(from Toronto)

citizenry could best be served through . . . another level of government." Only local government, argued one group, is in a position to perform many tasks "according to the true needs and to the true advantage of villages, towns and people living there."

The Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce agreed: "We believe that decentralization should be from both senior levels of government to communities and individuals." This can be accomplished, the Committee for Community Government argued in Montreal, "by the infusion into local levels of government [of] the powers and financial resources needed to fulfil their mandate as the first level of government." If this were done, contended the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, municipalities would become "partners in government rather than subservient creatures of the provinces." Similarly, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities argued that local government should no longer "be a child of the provincial government, often wondering about the whims of its parent."

Needed: intergovernmental cooperation

One Torontonion proposed that "instead of referring to different 'levels' of government, which implies that the central government has some sort of superiority over the others, we should refer to different 'orders' of government." Many held that the distribution of powers, as well as the behaviour of governments in a federal system, should reflect equality of status between the "centre" and the "constituent units," that each of the two senior orders of governments are sovereign within their own jurisdictions. Premier Hatfield, in Moncton, deplored that this principle has not always been respected, saying that "over the years, there has been a tendency on the part of the government of Canada and the bureaucracy of Canada to regard the provinces as not equal partners in Confederation, as not strong effective forces for improving the quality of life in this country." One Montrealer said it in his own colourful words: "The provinces are not all stupid; they too have prime ministers." In Moncton, someone put the idea this way: "It seems to me that if we could have faith in the provinces, we could come to a point where Acadians and French Quebecers, among others, could feel at ease in their regions."

The theme of "equal status" and "harmonious relationships" between Ottawa and the provinces was stressed time and time again. One participant in Winnipeg spoke of "the difficulties" Canadians have in understanding the word federalism: "Is the federal government a senior government or do we have eleven equal governments?" He called for greater mutual respect between them. A labour leader in Toronto regretted the paternalistic attitude of Ottawa towards the provinces, and particularly towards Quebec: "It is a policy offering inferior status and inviting separatism." Other speakers deplored that all levels of "governments and politicians have allowed the process of government to become one of competition and confrontation."

Many participants felt that new mechanisms or institutions are required to generate the proper "attitudes" and "climate" between the various orders of governments and politicians. One Calgarian proposed the creation of "intergovernmental embassies" in Ottawa and in each provincial capital to facilitate dialogue between the two orders of government. The British Columbia Human Rights Council saw great merits in the central cabinet "meeting jointly with individual provincial cabinets from time to time on matters of mutual interest." Still another speaker in Calgary had in mind "intergovernmental agencies freed from political dominance and operating as public trusts" in areas such as university grants and television licensing where "it does not matter to the public whether it gets the service from the federal or provincial government."



18. **Regional representation in central institutions**

Background

Just as federal states differ in the distribution of legislative powers, so they also differ in the composition, functions and powers of their central government institutions.

The Supreme Court

In most federal states there is a court of last instance which interprets the constitution. It is called the Supreme Court in Canada and the United States, the Constitutional Tribunal in the Federal Republic of Germany. This court may declare invalid or inoperative any statute enacted by the central or provincial legislatures if it contradicts the constitution.

Because of its importance, particularly in a federal state, the existence of this institution is usually guaranteed in the constitution itself. Such is the case in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany. Such is not the case in Canada. A general court of appeal was foreseen in the British North America Act and the Supreme Court of Canada was created, in 1875, but only by an ordinary statute of Parliament, acting alone. And the Court really became "supreme" only in 1949 when the right of appeal, in civil law matters, to the Judicial Committee of the (United Kingdom) Privy Council was abolished.

The power to appoint the judges of the Supreme Court is also very important, because it is the Court which renders final decisions and advisory opinions affecting subjects as controversial as the distribution of legislative powers and the protection of fundamental rights, where these rights are expressed in the constitution. In most federal states, such appointments are made by the central government, but usually the regions have a voice in the selection. In the United States, appointments are made by the president, but must be ratified by the Senate, a second chamber made up of representatives elected in the fifty states. In Canada, the federal cabinet is at present under no constitutional obligation to consult the provinces or to seek parliamentary ratification of appointments.

In the Victoria Charter of 1971, the federal government proposed that the existence of the Supreme Court be written into the constitution and that the provinces participate in the appointment of judges. But the charter was not agreed upon and, consequently, no changes were made. The Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1978 embodies these same proposals, stipulating further that a "House of the Federation" would be asked to ratify the appointments.

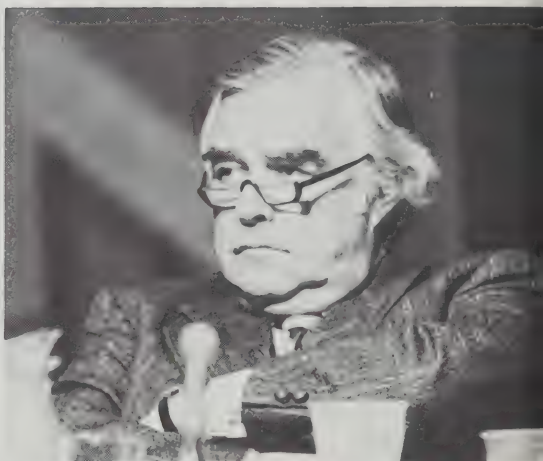
The present Supreme Court Act provides that three of the nine judges should be members of the Quebec bar or judiciary. The reason is that Quebec has its own civil law, not the common law of the other provinces. The Constitutional Amendment Bill suggests that the number be raised to four Quebec judges out of a total of eleven and that Quebec civil-law matters be heard only by judges trained in that system.

The Senate

The second chambers of other federal states have a "regional content." Their members are either elected by the population of the member states, as in the United States and Australia, or named by the regional governments, as in the Federal Republic of Germany. In Switzerland, the manner of selecting them is left to each canton.

The Canadian Senate more closely resembles the House of Lords, the upper chamber of the United Kingdom's unitary state, than a federal second chamber. Admittedly, the seats are distributed on a regional basis — twenty-four each for the maritimes, Quebec, Ontario and the west, six for Newfoundland, two for the territories. But appointments to the Senate are made, in fact, by the prime minister and he is under no obligation to consult the provincial governments.

The Constitutional Amendment Bill (1978) would replace the Senate by a House of the Federation. Members would be designated on a 50-50 basis by the House of Commons and the provincial legislative assemblies in accordance with party representation in their ranks. The federal



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Progressive Conservative party and some provincial bodies have proposed a House of the Provinces, similar to the Federal Republic of Germany's second chamber, the Bundesrat.

The regulatory agencies

Federal regulatory agencies, such as the National Energy Board, the Canadian Transport Commission, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, have roles that affect provincial interests considerably. The federal cabinet alone appoints their members. Many provinces have requested that they be consulted in these appointments.

Questions

Should Canada continue with its present Supreme Court or move to a specialized constitutional tribunal? Either way, how should it be composed? What should be the ratio of civil-law judges to common-law judges? How should its members be appointed? What should be the scope of its jurisdiction?

What, if anything, should be done with the Senate? What should be the composition, functions, powers of the upper house, if there should be one? (It is to be noted that the Task Force hearings took place before the introduction of the Constitutional Amendment Bill, 1978.)

Should the provinces influence the composition of federal regulatory agencies?

“[We call for] the establishment of new national institutions, or the reform of existing ones, such as the Senate and federal agencies, boards and commissions, to allow for the fuller expression of regional interests, for the resolution of intergovernmental conflicts, and to serve as political guardians of the integrity of the federal system.”

(Premier Davis of Ontario, in Toronto)

“A greater decentralization of the federal government towards the provinces is not the answer to these new aspirations. It is urgent to develop new formulas to allow the two senior levels of government to achieve a greater regionalization of their administrative services, their policies and their decision-making process.”

(Senator Maurice Lamontagne, in Ottawa)

“There is indifference and disenchantment in this part of the country. It rises out of powerlessness. The only way to overcome the ennui is to give us a share of power in the national government.”

(in St. John's)

“The institutions of central government have failed to represent provincial and regional interests sufficiently to dispel the continuing sense of alienation of the Atlantic and western provinces. The country has reached a point of political and constitutional paralysis which now demands an exceptional effort of reform.”

(The Committee for a New Constitution, in Toronto)

“Western Canadian grievances towards the existing federal system do not require further documentation today. If these grievances remain unsatisfied after decades of agitation, it is not through the want of vigorous protest by prairie politicians. The problem lies not with the articulateness of the west, but rather with an insensitive and unresponsive central government.”

(in Calgary)

“The federal presence, especially the federal bureaucracy, has become too cumbersome and entrenched to respond adequately to local and regional needs.”

(Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, in Toronto)

“What we want is a stronger say in the decision-making process.”

(in Moncton)

“We, as Canadians, are not getting the kind of leadership that we expect and that we need in a very difficult period in our history. Our politicians, the people we elected, have lost sight of what their role is. I would like to see our Parliament and our government dispense with some of the so-called traditions of English Parliament. I would like to see an end to this garbage of desk thumping, to this business of interrupting speakers, to the business of getting maybe two hours work done in an eight hour work day. We are prepared to work the whole day. Why should not they?”

(in Vancouver)

Opinions

In previous chapters the Task Force has reported a great deal of what many Canadians said about regional alienation, frustrations, feelings of "powerlessness" in influencing central political institutions. Echoed were statements about the "insensitive," "pen-pushing," "cumbersome," "entrenched" central government bureaucracy, about politicians "no longer in touch with the people," about the central Canada bias of too many federal economic policies and about the need to redistribute power between the two orders of government so as to achieve greater responsiveness and accountability.

Yet, there were many participants who believed that the failure of federal institutions to provide an adequate, sensitive forum for regional interests could best be tackled in Ottawa itself. The Commissioners were repeatedly told that the provinces must have greater influence, "at the centre," an idea sometimes described as "provincialization of central institutions."

Participants at the hearings and correspondents directed their opinions and proposals at the parliamentary and federal system in general, and more specifically at the structures of the Supreme Court, the Senate and the House of Commons, at the electoral system, the political parties and the regulatory agencies.

The parliamentary and federal system of government

A few speakers thought that the Canadian parliamentary system has never been altogether suitable for a federal country. While most others disagreed, saying that, on the contrary, Parliament "represents the unity of this country," a number of them felt that an excessive centralist bias had arisen because of a combination of factors such as the composition of the Senate and the electoral process.

For a citizen in Calgary and many others, the main problem was one of "overgovernment," of the system at the centre being too often duplicated within the provinces. For some, the main problem was the great distance between the citizens and the parliamentary institutions in Ottawa: "Our representatives go to Ottawa and they're a long way from home, and the load of the work in Ottawa is such that they lose contact very quickly." Whatever the cause, to a Winnipegger, our system of government is just not sufficiently "responsive or accountable" to "local needs"; to a Vancouverite, it is "incapable of providing a forum for the expression of provincial interests."

The Supreme Court

Supreme Court reform was a subject fairly often raised at Task Force hearings, particularly in Quebec where its "cardinal" role in the interpretation of the constitutional division of powers is keenly felt. The effects of the Court's decisions on the evolution of the civil law and the method of appointing judges were of particular concern. It was stressed that justice must not only be done, but seen to be done. A Vancouver lawyer expressed the opinion that the Supreme Court "does not reflect the differences between the civil and common law systems." As a consequence, he thought, "Quebecers do not view the Supreme Court's decisions as being legitimate."

The Task Force found that Supreme Court reform was now attracting attention everywhere else, particularly in the west. Recent decisions of that tribunal in matters concerning the taxation of natural resources were arousing great interest and even some anger in the provincial capitals of that region at the time of the hearings.

A professor in Vancouver regretted that the pattern of the Supreme Court decisions "does not resemble that of the Judicial Committee of the (British) Privy Council so much as that of the United States Supreme Court," and that both the Canadian and the American courts have favoured the centre over the regions. A citizen in Montreal felt that this pattern may well be justified in legal interpretation, but that the centralist image of the court "must be changed."

Because Ottawa selects judges of the Supreme Court and because the Court "decides upon the boundaries" of federal and provincial jurisdictions, "one of the affected parties chooses the

“Parliament was invented ages ago, for totally different circumstances and not in respect of a federal country. It is therefore not surprising that it doesn't work too well here.”

(in Moncton)

“Our Crown, parliaments, courts, civil service and publicly-owned institutions are well designed; they have given the citizens excellent service, and they have attracted their share of able and dedicated personnel. In assessing their public sector, citizens do themselves a disservice if they neglect its many assets.”

(in Calgary)

“It is unfortunate that the Canadian Senate has played no federal role. This fact has obscured for most Canadians the potential of a truly federal upper house in insuring better communication between provinces and the centre.”

(in Vancouver)

“Our representatives go to Ottawa and they're a long way from home, and the load of the work in Ottawa is such that they lose contact very quickly with their home riding. A way that this could be overcome is to take that old workhorse, the Senate; and instead of making it a pasture make it a work field by having senators appointed by provincial governments subject to appointment and recall. That is one way that communication on the government level could be improved.”

(in Winnipeg)

“The Senate was established to give adequate representation to the provinces and the regions. . . . Although it may have done so at one time, senators have long since ceased to represent anything but the party that appointed them.”

(Eastern Townships Citizens Association, in Montreal.)

“The Senate is not reflective of cultural or linguistic groups as such, and thus does not reflect the particular concerns of French Canadians.”

(in Vancouver)

“We could return the nation's decision-making centre to the Commons, away from the overinflated PMO, PCO and federal bureaucracy. We could stop the dangerous and absurd closed-doors first ministers' conferences.”

(in Edmonton)

“Our party system, as presently constituted, has the virtues of its defects. Party discipline has two important consequences which many would see as eminently worthy. First, Parliament seems more likely than Congress [in the U.S.] to enact policies whose benefits are widely dispersed across regions. It does so because party discipline makes each member's ambitions and electoral fate partly contingent on the fate of the party as a whole; his electorate, for certain purposes, transcends his constituency. Interests which are not geographically concentrated could get short shrift from a Parliament whose members were only constituency-oriented. Second, where party discipline is weak, coalitions are typically built slowly: fiscal policy, in particular, might be even more cumbersome than it is now.”

(in Vancouver)

18. Regional representation in central institutions

arbitrator quite without reference to the other." This was seen by most speakers who commented on this subject as "a manifestly unjust situation."

The Senate

The Senate had very few fans among those the Task Force heard. Almost without exception, they said it had failed to play the role of the institution created in 1867 to represent regional and minority interests in Ottawa. It was called a "sham," a "pasture," a "patronage-bound" institution whose original responsibilities have been "diminished" to a point where it is left with no mandate, enjoys no "credibility" and represents nobody "but the party that has appointed" its members.

Senate reform was particularly popular in the west and in the maritimes. To many speakers, the distribution of seats had become outmoded, particularly with the growth of the west. Few indicated awareness of the Senate's contributions in specialized legislation and public inquiries.

For most who addressed themselves to this subject, the method of appointment of senators was the major cause of its inability to speak effectively for the regions: this was at the "heart of its impotence," said two professors in Vancouver. One speaker said the Senate had "all the inherent weakness of a body appointed for life on a largely partisan-patronage basis." Many asked how senators could be expected to speak for the regions or the provinces when they were appointed by the central government. With no independent political base, senators do not dare amend or veto too many of the policy initiatives of the House of Commons and of the cabinet. Instead, most of them are content to limit their involvement to the drafting of technical changes in legislation, some speakers said.

Neither does the Senate reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. Some participants objected to party affiliation. At least one deplored the constitution's provision that no one under thirty years of age can be a senator. "What an anomaly, what a lack of realism, what flagrant injustice to a group of Canadians which easily forms a third of the population," said a young citizen of Hull.

The House of Commons

The effectiveness of members of Parliament, said the Committee for an Independent Canada, is undermined by the "over-inflated" Prime Minister's Office, Privy Council Office and federal bureaucracy. The representative character of the House of Commons is essentially meaningless because the cabinet is really "the major regionally representative institution."

One grievance often mentioned, especially in the west, was the manner in which, as a former member of Parliament in Winnipeg put it, the Commons is "so loaded in favour of Quebec and Ontario that the rest of us might as well go home." To someone else, even if every person in western Canada voted Liberal, and all western MPs were government members, their voice in Parliament "[would not be] strong enough to get a fair deal for the west if Quebec and Ontario members disagreed with them." Some minority groups also felt that they were under-represented, that their "needs and priorities were ignored." One association of native peoples suggested that "Indian people would require at least ten seats in the House of Commons" to have a proper representation.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities doubted that members of Parliament were provided with the "specific reference" and "expert advice" that "regional and provincial differences require." And they "spend too much time in Ottawa," said another group.

The electoral system

A number of citizens complained about not having "any effect or influence in Ottawa." "Since the House of Commons is elected on the basis of population only," said a speaker in Calgary, "it will always reflect the most populous parts of the country." This meant that "key policies . . . will always reflect the primary interests of Ontario and Quebec."

"In the British parliamentary system, all MPs must vote as a bloc, whatever their personal beliefs or the specific interests of the constituency. This is a dominating factor in the House of Commons and, therefore, to a considerable extent, the MPs do not have determining and constructive roles to play in the House. Theoretically speaking, discussions about reconciling differences of opinion, representations concerning regional interests and other matters are taking place in caucus meetings, *in camera*. Besides, the role of MPs on the government side, as well as that of those in opposition, consists in selling the party line, as agreed in caucus, rather than being the public and visible spokesmen of their constituents."

(in Montreal)

"At the very least, this country needs a system of proportional representation. However, even proportional representation might not be sufficient. Ontario and Quebec between them would probably continue to hold the majority of seats with which to control the rest of Canada. I would suggest that there should be also concurrently some form of representation in the federal Parliament by regional groups or provinces to prevent unfair domination by the two most populated provinces."

(in Vancouver)

"The federal Parliament is so loaded in favour of Quebec and Ontario that the rest of us might as well go home. I think, having been an MP, it is almost a travesty to take the money that they offer you to go down there, because you might just as well stay at home."

(in Winnipeg)

"All central Canadians appear to be Liberals, and all Liberals central Canadians. All members from outlying regions appear to be Conservatives and all Conservatives appear to be from outlying regions. Not unnaturally, voters and the parties themselves come to see parties in these black and white regional terms. Voters outside Quebec and Ontario see themselves utterly excluded from representation in the party permanently in power. Many westerners may be alienated from national politics for this reason alone."

(in Vancouver)

"Canadians living in northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia do not have any effect or influence in Ottawa. . . . What is the solution? The solution to me seems to be to change the constitution immediately to limit the number of seats the two largest provinces can send to Ottawa and I suggest that each be limited to not more than 20 per cent of the total seats. I know that I don't feel that I'm a part of Canada under the present representation system. My vote doesn't count and it never will."

(in Calgary)

"Even if every single person in western Canada voted Liberal and all western MPs were government members, the voice in government is not strong enough to give a fair deal for the west."

(in Vancouver)

18. Regional representation in central institutions

In Vancouver, the "winner take all" electoral system was criticized because it "exaggerates and distorts regional differences" and "forces parties to make invidious distinctions between constituencies," paying more attention to some, where they have a chance to win, than to others. Their distortions created the appearance of "homogeneous regional blocks in Parliament" which "alienate from national politics" those voters whose party is not in power. The present case of Quebec, which hurts the Progressive Conservatives, and the case of Alberta, which hurts the Liberals, were mentioned.

The party system

Party politics also came in for criticism. Party discipline and "deeply entrenched cabinet solidarity" were seen as reducing "the ability of the federal government to reflect within itself Canada's regional diversity." Party discipline made it difficult for MPs "to create cross-party regional alliances." "Federal politics are obsessed by partisanship" said a citizen in Quebec.

The party "whip," by obliging "all MPs to vote as blocs, whatever their personal convictions" effectively ensures that "in large measure the members of the House of Commons do not have a determinant and really constructive role to play," said a Montrealer. Within the governing party, the obligation to follow party lines meant that backbenchers "have practically no influence on policies arrived at in cabinet." The end result, said a speaker in Winnipeg, is that one votes for "excellent individuals," only to find they must surrender so much power that their party leader is in a position "very comparable to the divine right of kings."

A citizen in Toronto, placing these criticisms in a broader perspective, went so far as to say that Canada "has basically the same kind of [party] system" as those which have led to authoritarian rule in many third world countries. Because the government was essentially led by a political party rather than by Parliament, democracy depended upon the orientation of the party in power: "If the party in power behaves democratically, we have democracy. If the party in power does not behave democratically, we do not have democracy."

While these were the opinions of the majority who appeared at the Task Force sessions, contrary views were also expressed. One speaker in Vancouver felt that party discipline meant that "petty parochialism and individual ambition can be overridden to achieve policies whose benefits are widely dispersed across regions": it ensured that agreement could be reached in complicated fields such as fiscal policy. A citizen in Winnipeg, developing this point further, said "political strength" or "economic strength" cannot be exerted unless the party system is tightened even more. Indeed, the Task Force was told, there are "so many political parties" in Canada that "we can never have a majority opinion in Parliament."

The regulatory agencies

A number of participants underlined how provincial policies were "very significantly affected by the decisions of federal regulatory agencies." Yet they have no say in the appointment of members of such federal bodies as the Canadian Wheat Board, the National Energy Board and the Canadian Transport Commission. Their exclusion has led to "indifference and disenchantment," especially in the west and the east.

“There are several highly significant federal boards and commissions that set federal policy on a wide range of national matters. These include the Bank of Canada, the Canadian Transport Commission, the CRTC, the Canadian Development Corporation. The decisions which these federal bodies make have a profound effect on the development of the country as a whole and upon provincial priorities, and yet the provinces have no voice in the appointment of the directors to these bodies and are rarely consulted to assist in formulating policy. These are merely institutions of the federal government. We need genuine federal institutions, institutions which are multigovernmental in character.”

(Premier Bennett of British Columbia, in Vancouver)

“The need is for an in-depth restructuring of the Supreme Court, in order to recognize the cultural duality of Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“Francophones are as disinclined to deliver their destinies, the autonomy of their own government, over to that federal institution [the Supreme Court] as they are to Parliament.”

(Labour Relations Board of British Columbia, in Vancouver)

“The provinces should participate in a meaningful manner in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the panel of judges sitting on appeals from Quebec should be competent in French.”

(in Montreal)

“As a method of calming suspicions, it could be provided that in constitutional matters the Court should have equal representation between the judges appointed from Quebec and from the other regions of Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“We need a specialized Supreme Court for dealing with conflicts between the two official languages. And my suggestion is that the only possible fair basis for this specialized Supreme Court is a 50-50 basis, half francophone and half anglophone. And I suggest furthermore that the half francophone should be divided roughly one-half Quebec and one-half drawn from the francophone federations of the rest of Canada. Now, that could guarantee, I think, French Canada against a recurrence of a shameful episode — and I think it was a shameful episode — of the air controllers’ strike and the way it was handled.”

(in Vancouver)

“We favour provincial participation in the appointment of judges of the Supreme Court of Canada.”

(Premier Davis of Ontario, in Toronto)

“The provinces should have more influence over the appointment of Supreme Court judges. But I believe the court itself should be enlarged to at least eleven members, so that there could be three . . . judges from western Canada, as well as three from Quebec and three from Ontario and two from the Atlantic provinces. The government’s present plan to entrench in the constitution ‘at least three judges from Quebec’ in a court of nine judges, and then to give Quebec a veto over all future changes in the constitution, is not acceptable.”

(in Vancouver)

18. Regional representation in central institutions

Proposals

The parliamentary and federal system of government

For some Canadians, their system of government would be improved by enhancing, in the words of a Winnipegger, the "system of checks and balances . . . that will give Canada a chance to become a mature federal power." A Montrealer called for "a fundamental reform" which would give to Parliament "a much more important role, at the expense of cabinet and the public service." What he sought was to reflect regional and cultural interests in the decision-making process "at the very heart of our central institutions."

Most speakers agreed with them that better regional representation in federal institutions was imperative to make "Canadians feel that the central government was their government." Many saw it as a way to prevent excessive decentralization and improve "the sensitivity of the federal government to regional problems and its capacity to deal with them within overall national programs," as a citizen in Winnipeg put it.

A few speakers, in and outside Quebec, mentioned the need to implement some English-French "binationalism" in the federal institutions. A 50-50 formula was mentioned.

Most Quebecers, however, said that regional representation, no matter how good, would be no substitute for a readjustment in the distribution of powers.

The Supreme Court

A few speakers proposed a specialized constitutional tribunal, but most who spoke on the subject believed that the Supreme Court should continue to rule in constitutional matters as a general court of appeal. All of them favoured the entrenchment of the existence of the Supreme Court in the constitution, and most endorsed the inclusion both of its composition and its jurisdiction.

A few experts, in Montreal and Vancouver, in order to "improve the legitimacy" of the Court in Quebec, recommended the equality of representation of the two legal systems, or of francophones and anglophones.

To reflect regionalism, many participants, including Premiers Davis and Bennett, insisted that a minimum condition should be provincial participation in the appointment of judges. Views varied on the best method of consultation, particularly on the usefulness of soliciting the advice of the law societies. A few wanted the provinces to be able to appoint judges directly, and thereby acquire "some control over the composition of the Court in matters directly affecting their interests." But most speakers were opposed to that idea, though some called for guarantees that would ensure that a proportion of judges would be appointed from their regions. A professor in Montreal reflected that "if the Senate were reformed so as to play a [real] role in representing the regions and the ethnic and linguistic groups," the appointment of the judges should include a process of ratification "by a two-third majority in the Senate."

To accommodate provincial participation in appointments of judges, a number of citizens suggested that the Court should be increased in size from nine to ten, eleven, or more. Proposed numbers varied, in part, according to the regional distribution of judges which different speakers thought appropriate for their own region.

The Senate

Most speakers saw the ideal second house as reflective of regional "concerns" and "interests," to which some added "cultural diversity."

There was almost universal agreement that the present method of selecting senators should be changed. The consensus stopped there. One speaker wished that the Senate would just "pass away." Some recommended that senators be elected. An elected Senate was seen as having various advantages: the senators would be "accountable to their electorates" and they would

“The composition and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court should be written into the constitution with special provisions concerning cases referred by the province of Quebec, because of its special civil-law system. Furthermore, the appointment of judges should be subject to consultation with the regions, which should even have the power of veto.”

(in Montreal)

“The composition of the Supreme Court could be altered in cases which are to be decided by the civil law of Quebec. Having greater representation from Quebec in civil-law cases would enhance the legitimacy of the Supreme Court’s decisions in Quebec. The Court, for the purposes of federal-provincial issues, should be structured so that provinces and regions would be able to appoint judges directly from their regions. This would allow the provinces some control over the composition of the Court in matters directly affecting their interests and would also lead to greater respect for the decisions of the Supreme Court.”

(in Vancouver)

“We should focus on the reform of existing institutions, rather than the creation of new institutions with no historical basis and only hypothetical future utility.”

(in Vancouver)

“If Parliament consists of the Crown, plus a House of Commons elected by ‘rep by pop’ to which the government is responsible, and a Senate with equal membership from each Canadian region, then we will at last have a system of checks and balances in place that will give Canada a chance to become a mature federal power.”

(in Winnipeg)

“The only alternative to an elected Senate is more power to the provinces. The west and Atlantic Canada have interests which sometimes clash with those of Ottawa and Ontario and Quebec, whose government Ottawa mostly is. Greater provincial power won’t do much for national unity, but unless I’m given another choice, I’m ready to support it. I think an elected Senate is a far safer and more unifying alternative.”

(in Calgary)

“Abolish the Senate and replace it with a new upper chamber composed of members elected from the various regions of Canada for limited terms.”

(in Moncton)

“It may be an elected Senate, a Senate from the regions, a House of the Provinces, perhaps a Canadian version of the West German Bundesrat — whatever body you in your wisdom feel could deal constructively with the enormous economic and social issues of the day (the preservation of a language and culture in one region, the relief of unemployment in another region, the uncertain ownership of natural resources in a third region). But it must be set up without undue delay.”

(Canada West Foundation, in Edmonton)

“There should be some reshaping of Canadian political institutions and especially the Senate, which should reflect more fully the regional diversity of the country. . . . This could possibly be achieved by equal representation from each province and by senators being nominated by the elected governments.”

(in Vancouver)

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really "represent the regions in which they were elected." This way, the Senate could "champion regional issues" and voice regional views on national matters. Elaborating on this theme, a speaker in Calgary reasoned that federal-provincial conflicts would be diverted "to another level" and the Senate would be "more powerful than the provincial governments in protecting regional interests."

Alternatively, some felt a Senate membership appointed by "both the House and the provincial" legislative assemblies or by the federal and provincial executives would be another way to secure regional representation; in the second case, each senator would be accountable to, and could be removed from office by the government which appointed him or her. The model of the Bundesrat, the German senate, to which nominations are made by the Länder (provincial) governments and in which the leaders of those governments themselves may sit, was of great interest, particularly to politicians in Ontario and British Columbia.

Many speakers said that the powers of the second house should be increased, that it should have the right, for example, to revise the constitution, to approve all cost-shared programs and ratify all appointments to the Supreme Court and to federal regulatory bodies.

Finally, in any redistribution of Senate seats, a majority of participants favoured equal regional representation; a small number, equal provincial representation. A five-region base was also suggested, particularly by British Columbia, but one proposal was that seventeen regions would better reflect economic realities.

The House of Commons

Reform of the House of Commons was rarely mentioned as a topic in itself but there were a few specific proposals. Members of Parliament should be provided with better research assistance and have greater access to government information. To assure more contact between MPs and their constituencies, it was suggested that "the amount of time the Commons is in session should be limited."

In general, however, speakers approached the subject of Commons reform through electoral or party system reform. The assumption seemed to be that changes in these two areas would enable the Commons to work more effectively, even without any other structural changes.

Electoral system reform

To reduce the predominance of heavily populated regions in the House of Commons, a citizen in Calgary proposed that Ontario and Quebec "each be limited to not more than 20 per cent of the total seats" of the House of Commons. The most frequently proposed substitutes to the present electoral system, however, were variants of proportional representation. This type of representation was championed as one which could give each party a number of seats in line with the numbers of votes received; as a consequence, "parties would no longer seem to be regionally homogeneous blocs." Further, since all votes would be reckoned in the distribution of seats, "a vote would be a vote wherever found"; today's concern, that votes cast for a losing candidate are lost votes, would be erased.

Supporters of proportional representation admitted that it might make minority or coalition governments more likely, and that "the average life of a government would be shorter." But the payoff would be "improved regional representation" and a cabinet "forced to take Parliament seriously."

To counter the likelihood that proportional representation would still leave the central provinces in a dominant position, a citizen in Vancouver proposed that "there should also be concurrently some form of representation in the federal Parliament by regional groups of provinces."

The party system

One change proposed for the party system was that its functions should be "quite explicitly"

“The creation of an elected Senate, with the same powers as those now given the Senate in the BNA Act, would not bring down the curtain on federal-provincial conflict. It won't bring an end to regional disparity or create a bilingual, bicultural paradise. . . . But it will tend to shift some of the conflict to another level and make it internal to the workings of the central government itself. It will make senators the direct representatives of the interests of their regions or provinces. It will make the Senate more powerful than the provincial governments in protecting regional interests. That's why some provincial politicians will oppose it.”

(in Calgary)

“Senators could be elected (as in the United States) or appointed as delegates of provincial governments (as in West Germany). Only thus can a senator have an independent power base as a meaningful representative of regional and cultural diversity in Canada, and be plugged into the centre of national policy-making.”

(in Vancouver)

“The creation of an elected Senate would entail a fundamental restructuring of parliamentary democracy in Canada, a restructuring about which even western Canadians would be extremely cautious if they were aware of the scope of change involved.”

(in Calgary)

18. Regional representation in central institutions

spelled out in the constitution. Some participants also suggested that it could be loosened up somewhat. Relaxed party discipline, it was said, would free party members to declare their personal and regional positions more forcefully.

The regulatory agencies

To achieve what Premier Davis of Ontario called "fuller expression of regional interests," it was sometimes said that the directors of significant federal agencies and commissions should be appointed by "a process involving provincial governments as well as the Government of Canada." The purpose would be to ensure that appointees had knowledge of, and concern for, provincial interests and points of view. One speaker asked if it would "really hurt if 40 per cent of people serving on boards of government or as directors were appointed by the provinces?" To him, this would be a "very, very useful" change in Canadian federalism.

Background

Definition

Fundamental rights are "claims" possessed by a person or group of persons and guaranteed by law. They are meant to protect citizens from the arbitrary exercise of power by governments and from a possible "tyranny of the majority" of their compatriots. These rights are both individual and collective. The first belong to all persons in a state, regardless of their membership in any group or community. Examples are the freedom of expression, the right of association, the right to a fair hearing, the right of ownership and the right to education.

Collective rights are of two types. The first may be claimed by an individual because of his membership in an identifiable group. An example is the school rights of religious groups protected by the BNA Act. A second type of collective rights applies only to collectivities as a whole. An individual cannot claim them for himself, but only on behalf of a collectivity. An example would be the right to strike and the right of self-determination of peoples.

Legislation

In Canada, fundamental individual rights are guaranteed by various legal sources: by the constitution (which, by virtue of the preamble of the BNA Act, bestows upon Canadians centuries of British constitutional tradition in the area of human rights), by federal and provincial statutes and by the common-law and civil-law systems, as interpreted by the courts.

Specific bills of rights have been enacted by Saskatchewan in 1947, by the Parliament of Canada in 1960 and by Quebec in 1975, applicable in their respective areas of jurisdiction. Human rights acts and codes, with commissions set up to implement their provisions, have also been adopted by Parliament and provincial legislatures.

Canada does not, however, have a constitutional bill of rights as do the United States and many other countries, federal and unitary. A proposal to "entrench" a list of basic rights in the Canadian constitution is included in the central government's Constitutional Amendment Bill (1978).

The "entrenchment" of rights involves placing them beyond the ordinary reach of political executives or legislatures by incorporating them into a part of the constitution. To be changed, they would thereafter require a special amendment, a procedure more difficult than the simple passage of an act by the competent legislature. Such a procedure in Canada might require not only the participation of Parliament, but also the consent of the provincial executives or legislative assemblies or the consent of the electorate itself by way of a referendum. That procedure is, generally, itself incorporated in the constitution.

Language rights

Certain language rights are mentioned in section 133 of the British North America Act and section 23 of the Manitoba Act of 1870. These "constitutional rights" are construed by the courts as "entrenched."

The documents in question, however, cover only the legislative and the judicial processes — and only in Quebec, Manitoba and in the federal sphere. In Manitoba, Section 23 was rendered inoperative by a provincial statute in 1890. The matter is presently before the courts.

The language of education and the language of public services are protected in some instances by ordinary federal or provincial legislation, for example, the Official Languages Act (1969) with respect to federal services. But, except for the cases mentioned above, they are not constitutionally guaranteed at present in Canada.

The Constitutional Amendment Bill (1978) proposes for entrenchment a fairly extensive list of rights, including those relating to the individual and to languages applicable in the legislatures, the courts, public services and education. In the latter category, parents would be guaranteed

Honestly,
Mr Levesque?



Hodder-Bow
CANADA WIDE

freedom to choose the official minority language for the education of their children — where official minority language schools exist. And these would exist at the discretion of the provinces where "numbers warrant." The courts, however, could decide whether the definition of that criterion in provincial laws was "reasonable."

Other "rights" mentioned in this chapter pertain to the protection of other languages, of cultures, and social, economic and political objectives. However important they are, the possibility of implementing some of them in law is often questioned by specialists.

Questions

What would be the best way of protecting fundamental rights, individual and collective, in Canada? By acts of the legislative bodies, federal and provincial, to be interpreted in specific cases by the courts? Should they be entrenched in the constitution? Should linguistic, cultural, minority and native rights be included? Should language-of-education rights be included?

“Because the British North America Act is an act of the British Parliament and because it was drawn up to meet the late nineteenth century needs of four colonies considering union, we feel that it is inadequate to meet the needs of present day Canadians. The original intent of the BNA Act has been lost as a result of judicial interpretation in a court beyond Canadian control.”

(Students of St. John High School, in Moncton)

“Canada is the only modern country in the world whose constitution is an act of parliament of another country. . . . It is a horse and buggy constitution which fails to provide for, or cope with, the vast changes that have taken place in Canada since 1867.”

(B.C. Provincial Committee of the Communist Party, in Vancouver)

“The Fathers of Confederation devised a combination of traditional parliamentary government and federalism. No one should be surprised if there are difficulties in operating it. Indeed, by any appraisal, the wonder is we have not had more.”

(in Calgary)

“It is a great fallacy to assume that our constitution is outmoded because it flows out of the British North America Act enacted in 1867. In reality, we are governed under a “living constitution,” one which has undergone remarkable changes in the distribution of governmental authority in the past century. In fact, throughout our history, most of the avenues for solution of our current dilemma have been thoroughly explored. We should be under no illusion that there are any magic wands which no one hitherto has been clever enough to discover.”

(Labour Relations Board of B.C., in Vancouver)

“There is but one course to follow: patriating the constitution at the earliest and doing away with the last remnants of the British tie so that all together we may, for once in our history, be mature enough to take responsibility for our destiny.”

(in Montreal)

“Canada, it is said, is a mature country but sometimes I wonder whether this is true, since we have not been able to agree on the patriation of the constitution.”

(in Montreal)

“We feel that the Canadian Parliament should exert full sovereignty over all constitutional matters and consequently the necessity of petitioning the United Kingdom Parliament regarding amendments of the British North America Act should be terminated as soon as possible pending full concurrence of all provinces.”

(Canadian Polish Congress, Inc., in Toronto)

“That alternative could include bringing the British North America Act to Canada. But what would we do with it when we got it here? Would we be able to do any better than we have for the last century? As a politician, I suspect the answer is no.”

(Paul Godfrey, in Toronto)

Opinions

Some participants at the Task Force hearings reminded the Commissioners that the rights and liberties of Canadians have been violated at times in Canadian history. "Even our recent history," claimed a citizen in Vancouver, "is pockmarked with incidents that would shame a Nazi." Some cited the "activities" of the RCMP and other police corps as an "unnecessary infringement into the civil liberties" of Canadians. Others, referring to the October crisis of 1970 in Quebec, bitterly criticized the use of the War Measures Act to "crush" the "rights of citizens."

Many participants recalled the various "injustices" suffered by diverse Canadian groups. Spokesmen for francophone minorities outside Quebec objected, sometimes vehemently, to being deprived of the right "to remain different," and "to continue as a distinct community," "as equal citizens." Many in the Acadian communities of the maritime provinces deplored the fact that they were being denied their "linguistic and cultural rights," "certain well-defined language rights," by actions "restricting or entirely abolishing" the right to an education in French. Similarly, several spokesmen for the anglophone minority in Quebec claimed that their "linguistic and cultural rights" were being threatened. Bill 101, one group stated, was robbing anglophones of the right "to survive as a distinct community" in Quebec.

A great number of francophone Quebecers speaking at the Task Force hearings contended that they had been deprived of their "collective rights." Some condemned the central government for denying Quebec the "right to develop its own linguistic and cultural policies," and Quebecers "the right of equality of both official cultures." Several referred to English Canada's refusal to acknowledge Quebec's right "to plan its own economic destiny." We have been denied our "economic rights," said a Montrealer, because we have been prevented from "earning a living in our own language" and barred "from participating in the leadership of big Canadian companies." Still others lamented "the fact" that francophone Quebecers were deprived of their right "to determine [their] political future" and "to be political masters in [their] own house."

Some ethnic minorities contended that they were being denied the right "to protect and cultivate" their culture. Without minority language rights, argued one group, "our right to preserve our ethnic and language differences" is doomed. Others argued that they were also being denied the opportunity "to participate in the economic and political power structure of the country" and therefore the right "to have a say in the future of Canada."

Equally vigorous were the protests of native groups who told the Task Force that their "national rights" were not being respected: namely, the right "to be considered as one of the founding nations of Canada" and "to be full partners in Confederation." Some contended that without certain "linguistic and cultural rights," the native peoples' entitlement "to survive as a unique cultural entity" would be lost. Still others recalled the long years of repression of "certain economic and political rights," which included "aboriginal rights," the right of "self development and self-sufficiency," and the "right truly to participate in our own political institutions and in the process of constitutional reform."

Some speakers, on the other hand, argued that Canada had generally done "a good job" of protecting the "rights and freedoms of its citizens." "This principle of individual civil freedom," argued the Winnipeg Jewish Community Council, "is basic to all our legislation. . . . [This country] has built an enviable body of law at both levels, federal and provincial, which buttress the principle in many tangible and practical ways." A citizen in Ottawa stated that "one of the deepest aspects of our national character has been its cultural tolerance towards minority groups." All democracies afford their citizens freedom under the law, he added, "but many do not go so far as to allow cultural freedom."

“Our present constitution is a miracle of statecraft. In spite of the ravages wrought upon it by the Judicial Committee, it is still marvellously flexible, giving us ample room to meet special needs by special arrangements; ample room for adaptation, innovation, ample room to solve new problems by the exercise of what Sir Robert Borden called ‘the common place quality of common sense’.”

(Senator Eugene Forsey, in Ottawa)

“The need for a major revision in the BNA Act has been blatant for fifteen years. . . . If this had been done ten years ago, I feel that much of the PQ’s attractiveness to its electorate would have disappeared.”

(in Vancouver)

“We do not need a change of constitution, what we need is a drastic change in the whole direction of our economy by the federal government. Canadians don’t want ten provinces with more powers, they want a strong central government which can direct our economy, our communications, our transportation. A change in constitution is not necessary and a change in constitution will not satisfy the separatists.”

(in Toronto)

“... The venerable British North America Act no longer relates to modern conditions. The Fathers of Confederation could not foresee the series of challenges which today face their country because of the changes which have taken place in the social and technological order.”

(The Vancouver Board of Trade, in Vancouver)

“In order to maintain Quebec in Canada, constitutional change which will accommodate Quebec’s aspirations is a necessity.”

(Students of St. John High School, in Moncton)

“Patchwork repair on the present BNA would not sufficiently restructure the country and would perpetuate present inequalities and the sense of frustration.”

(Multicultural Council of Windsor, in Toronto)

“I feel that major changes in our constitution will provide a climate that can make unity a possibility, rather than a forlorn hope, once again.”

(in Winnipeg)

“The Canadian constitutional crisis must be solved with a “made-in-Canada” constitution that recognizes Canada as a bi-national state.”

(Calgary City Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, in Calgary)

“We have had endless discussions over many years of constitutional reform, and we have little to show for all that effort. We have been so caught up in all the individual complexities and dilemmas and trade-offs that we have been frozen into inaction. We have now reached the point where the question must be put, and my motion is that we enlarge our horizon and set aside all the bits and pieces and past wrangles. It is time to have a new constitution.”

(Premier William Davis of Ontario, in Toronto)

“Our present constitution is flexible enough to accommodate much of what might reasonably be demanded in a modern federal system.”

(Warner Jorgenson, in Winnipeg)

Proposals

"If we are to redress the grievances of the past, then we must afford greater protection to our citizens." This statement by one Canadian reflected the basic sentiments of many who wanted to see the "enshrinement" of a diversity of rights in the constitution.

To entrench or not to entrench?

The majority of speakers favoured the "entrenchment" or the "integration" of some rights in the constitution. The idea of entrenching, a Vancouverite believed, was "now virtually accepted by the public, if not yet by all governments." "Let it be," argued the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, "a charter of the rights and the liberties [of individuals] as well as of the duties and the responsibilities of their governments at all levels."

Speakers supported entrenchment for a variety of reasons. Some maintained that the BNA Act does not properly define the basic relationship between government and citizens, and it "is madly defective in defining these civil liberties issues," declared a professor in Vancouver. A citizen in the same city said that entrenchment would bring clarity to the "immutability of individual rights." Other proponents of entrenchment asserted that it would "afford greater protection than that provided by statutes." Many criticized as inadequate the protection offered by the Official Language acts of Canada and New Brunswick, the Charter of the French Language in Quebec, and the laws, regulations and practices of other provinces in matters of the language of education and other public services. "Fundamental rights," argued the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, "cannot be left to the generosity or intolerance" of a parliamentary body.

Others suggested that elevating the Bill of Rights from a federal statute to constitutional status "might be a signal to the courts to cease their skitterish interpretation of that document."

Many speakers felt entrenchment was unnecessary. Some, looking for improvements by way of ordinary legislation and regulations, contended that the last word in this matter should be left to elected representatives of the people. They cited the need for flexibility in legislating on human rights so as to make them applicable in diverse circumstances of time and place. Reflecting this view, a professor in Calgary argued that Parliament and the provincial legislatures should debate fundamental rights "and a list of these should be drawn up in a formal statement — to be passed by all eleven authorities." He concluded that in a parliamentary system it is better to recognize rights formally than to attempt to enshrine them.

What to entrench in the constitution?

A minority of participants at the hearings thought it necessary to protect only certain already well-defined and generally accepted individual rights in the constitution. These would encompass primarily "freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and peaceful assembly." Some, such as the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, Ontario, among others, wanted to include those rights "as expressed in the Canadian Bill of Rights."

Other speakers went further, arguing that each Canadian, as an individual, was entitled to certain "social rights" which should also be guaranteed in the constitution. Senator Paul Yuzyk spoke of the need "to promote economic, social and cultural equality for all Canadians as individuals," while a citizen in Moncton urged that "equal rights and opportunities" be guaranteed to all Canadians regardless of "their ethnic, racial or religious background." Others suggested that federal equalization payments and programs for the reduction of disparities had become essential if all Canadians were to enjoy the right of access to adequate public services.

Some spoke, as did one Torontonians, of the necessity to recognize the "economic rights" of every Canadian in order to redress "the social and economic inequalities and injustices" of Canadian society. The B.C. Provincial Committee of the Communist Party asserted (nor was it alone in this), the rights of every citizen "to a job, to health, housing and the democratic rights of labour." The right to "a decent job" was often mentioned, particularly by the unemployed.

"There is a serious danger in undertaking a constitutional revision. Once the door is opened to massive constitutional change, it is difficult to close it without great and perhaps destructive revision. When you go about the country seeking opinions on what the constitution ought to be, you impair respect for the law as it now is. It is assumed that the government has decided to change the basic law that underpins the country, and it will be very difficult not to change it."

(The Law Society of PEI, in Charlottetown)

"In our view, the British North America Act is outmoded as a constitutional document. . . . Canada as a federation or union should have a made-in-Canada constitutional document that embodies an amending formula."

(Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, in Calgary)

"It is more important that the central government change its attitudes than undertake changes to the constitution. Arrogance must give way to modesty and verbal invective be replaced by a sympathetic understanding of grievances."

(in Quebec)

"May I suggest that the federal government adopt a new constitution as soon as possible; it would be preferable, however, if this could be accomplished after consultation and in cooperation with each of the provinces. If the parties cannot come to an agreement, then the matter should be decided by the majority of Canadians through a referendum or a Canada-wide vote."

(in Montreal)

"... constitutional changes ... are too important to be left solely to politicians. ... I suggest that ... a constituent assembly perhaps best expresses [what we need] — input from all levels and every segment of the community across Canada."

(in Calgary)

"We call upon the prime minister and all provincial premiers to assemble a broadly-based constitutional conference at which the terms of Confederation can be debated with a view to achieving the modifications necessary to meet the changing needs of a nation now 110 years old."

(Union of British Columbia Municipalities, in Vancouver)

"... the Multicultural Council proposes the convening of a national constitutional assembly. This assembly, empowered to develop a new constitution, should be composed of persons nominated by the federal, the provincial and municipal governments, as well as those from economic, social and cultural organizations."

(Multicultural Council of Windsor, in Toronto)

"I'm going to come out in the support of a constitutional assembly or a constituent assembly or a constitutional conference — call it what you will. It seems to me that our existing institutions are locked in a confrontation and I'm concerned that they won't be able to work their way out of it. After all, the constitutions of most of the western nations, with the exception of Great Britain, have all been drafted pursuant to a constitutional assembly. And I would like to see this idea thoroughly canvassed."

(in Vancouver)

The general public was no less certain that cultural and linguistic rights should be included in the constitution, though, generally speaking, experts were far from agreeing on the wisdom of doing so. Some proponents of English-French duality wanted the principle of equality between the two founding peoples — variously defined as "equality," or "equal partnership" or "equality of opportunities" — to be "enshrined" in the new constitution. To most, the consequences of doing so would be linguistic. To some, however, the consequences would be political in the sense that their constitutional recognition would affect the institutions of the country, making them more bi-cultural. Those who saw the consequences as linguistic only, wanted the right of the French and the English languages to be recognized in the legislatures, the courts, the public administration, broadcasting, and education, either everywhere in Canada or — a major qualification — wherever numbers permitted. Others opposed the whole process, denying the existence of such rights.

Reflecting the convictions of many, the PEI Human Rights Commission contended that language and language-of-education rights should be protected, not because they are "basic or fundamental human rights" but because they have acquired a "special and powerful status" in the life of the country, and because they "may be integral to the existence or survival of a culture, which some citizens may regard as tied to their own identity." In that context, they would be "constitutional rights" only.

A francophone group in Toronto maintained that the constitution should guarantee "that all levels of government will offer their services in both official languages," and that "the federal government [the constitution] accord to the nine other provinces the same minority language rights it now accords Quebec under Section 133 of the British North America Act." It was also suggested by this group that "a linguistic dimension be added to the religious dimension in Section 93 in the BNA Act permitting federal control over the educational destiny of minorities."

Many speakers who supported the concept of multiculturalism argued for the entrenchment of the right of the two official language groups and of ethnic minorities, to "cultivate and preserve their culture." Some wanted to enshrine "cultural freedom" or "the principle of equality of opportunities" for all cultures. The Winnipeg Jewish Community Council argued that legitimate needs and rights of multicultural groups could best be protected by "specifically proclaiming the multicultural nature of the Canadian body politic." The Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, Ont., observed that minority languages "deserve support whenever ethno-cultural groups are committed and capable of maintaining their linguistic identity, but they should not have constitutional protection." Some leaders of "ethnic groups" saw their language-of-education rights more as a provincial responsibility than as a federal one.

Spokesmen for the native peoples requested the entrenchment of their cultural and linguistic rights, and the constitutional recognition of their entitlement to compensation for their land claims and of their right to political self-determination and self-government.

Other speakers said that group rights should also include certain political rights. Some referred, as did several Acadian spokesmen, to the right of regional communities to control their "regional destinies," while others pointed to the right of the ethnic minorities "to equality of representation in central institutions." The Multicultural Association of Fredericton asserted that the "politically under-represented ethno-cultural groups [should be] . . . fully admitted to national decision-making bodies at all institutional levels. A significant number asserted that Quebec was entitled to the right "to determine its own cultural destiny," "the right of self-determination," and the right to control its "political destinies" (see Part III on Quebec).

Still others argued that minorities were not entitled to much protection, either legislative or constitutional. There are limits to the capacity of any country to guarantee to a minority that it will always be satisfied with the decisions made "in accordance with the procedure of majority rule," to quote one participant.

Background

The most radical way of changing a constitution is to replace it with a new one. Some political thinkers have suggested that a country should have a new constitution every generation or so, to keep in touch with the real world. Conversely, others have tended to judge the value of a constitution by the number of years it has been in existence.

There are other methods by which a constitution, particularly a federal one, can be changed in law or in fact: judicial interpretation, formal amendment, delegation of powers, constitutional convention, and executive agreement between the central and provincial governments.

Judicial interpretation

As they adjudicate conflicts placed before them by individuals, corporate bodies and governments, the courts, especially the Supreme Court, are called upon to interpret provisions of the constitution. In Canada, the high courts may also be invited by governments to do so directly, by references. Their interpretations become part of the constitution itself — implicit amendments — and, over a period of time, may influence its very character. Together, the decisions and opinions of the courts may, for example, reinforce centralizing or decentralizing tendencies in the distribution of powers in a federal state.

Formal amendment

A formal amendment takes place when a new article or section is inserted in the constitution or when an existing one is removed or modified following a special procedure which itself is generally part of the constitution. The authors of all constitutions try to make them rather difficult to amend formally so as to ensure continuity and prevent "tinkering" — the making of changes for narrow or temporary purposes.

The British North America Act, our main constitutional document, has been amended about twenty times since 1867. The provincial legislatures may amend their own constitutions — except in relation to the office of lieutenant-governor — and some have done so, for example, by eliminating upper houses. In 1949, Parliament acquired, by an amendment to the BNA Act, the power to change "the Constitution of Canada" in all but six areas, one of which is the distribution of legislative powers. Only the British Parliament can, at Canadian request, amend these excepted areas. In this limited way, the Canadian constitution is still domiciled in the United Kingdom.

Those who want to end this situation call for "patriation of the constitution." The obstacles lie within Canada: Canadians have been unable to agree on a general formula of amendment, a prerequisite to patriation in the minds of many political leaders. The Victoria Charter (1971) contained such a formula but neither it, nor any other, has been accepted by all the provinces.

Delegation of powers

Delegation of legislative powers from Parliament to provincial legislatures, or vice-versa, is not permitted in Canada. The Supreme Court has ruled that the legislative powers given to each level of government are mutually exclusive. But administrative delegation to a subordinate body — a commission or a board — of another level of government is permitted. It has been used, for example, for the regulation of interprovincial transportation where provincial agencies implement federal legislation. Although delegation, unlike formal amendment, does not change the constitution in law, as is the case with a formal amendment, it does contribute to its evolution.

Convention

Over the years, conventions have developed outside the framework of the constitution, sometimes even contrary to its written provisions. Conventions are practices of government held by politicians to be binding. There is perhaps no better example than the principle of responsible government. The constitution says very little about it, but the conventions of responsible government underpin the roles of the prime minister and the cabinet, and govern relations

PROVINCIAL PREMIERS'
CONSTITUTIONAL
Conference

NO SNORING
SVP



between the executive and the legislative branches. Another example: the authority of the monarch has been subjected to constitutional conventions that have made it almost totally dependent on the will of the elected representatives. Other sections of our written constitution have been made more or less obsolete by conventions; for example, the powers to reserve provincial bills and to disallow provincial laws.

Executive agreement

Many agreements, often in such vital fields as taxation, are reached following negotiations between members of the central and the provincial cabinets. These meetings contribute so much to the realities of the Canadian federal system that the Canadian system is often referred to as "executive federalism." These agreements are sometimes followed by legislation in Parliament and in the legislative assemblies.

Questions

Would Canadians be satisfied with constitutional changes by way of formal amendments, court decisions, new conventions, a few delegations of powers or more executive agreements? Or are they looking for a major revision or a completely new constitution? If the latter, how could it be achieved? Should patriation take place before a formal amending formula is agreed upon?

“Because the British North America Act is an act of the British Parliament and because it was drawn up to meet the late nineteenth century needs of four colonies considering union, we feel that it is inadequate to meet the needs of present day Canadians. The original intent of the BNA Act has been lost as a result of judicial interpretation in a court beyond Canadian control.”

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“Our present constitution is a miracle of statecraft. In spite of the ravages wrought upon it by the Judicial Committee, it is still marvellously flexible, giving us ample room to meet special needs by special arrangements; ample room for adaptation, innovation, ample room to solve new problems by the exercise of what Sir Robert Borden called ‘the common place quality of common sense’.”

(Senator Eugene Forsey, in Ottawa)

“... The venerable British North America Act no longer relates to modern conditions. The Fathers of Confederation could not foresee the series of challenges which today face their country because of the changes which have taken place in the social and technological order.”

(The Vancouver Board of Trade, in Vancouver)

“It would be sheer folly to adapt our constitution to the present situation. We must send it back to England. We need an all new one.”

(in Toronto)

“In every stratum of Quebec society, federalists firmly believe that the present constitution, although imperfect, remains a tool that has never been put to full use.”

(in Montreal)

“If Canadians of French culture wish to write a new constitution, let's do it.”

(Senator Henry Hicks, in Halifax)

Opinions

In previous chapters, the Task Force has reported what constitutional changes were perceived to be needed by different groups of Canadians in order to achieve their "linguistic, cultural, economic and political aspirations." We now focus on what was said about the means available to achieve these changes.

Three broad possibilities were envisaged by the public: the British North America Act could be replaced by an entirely new Canadian constitution; the existing constitution could be retained, but with major changes made either before or after patriation; the existing constitution could be retained, patriated or not, with only minor changes.

An obsolete document

Support for a "brand new constitution" came from a great variety of sources. Premier Davis of Ontario said: "It is time to have a new constitution [if] our federal state [is] to respond better to people's problems." A professor in Vancouver stated emphatically: "We need a new constitution." The members of an ethnic association in Regina supported "the proposition that the British North America Act be replaced." So many "bits and pieces" had to be put together that a new made-in-Canada document was described many times and everywhere as "inevitable" and "the solution to the present crisis."

Many who favoured a new or significantly altered constitution argued that times have changed greatly since 1867: the "venerable" British North America Act "is a horse and buggy constitution" which "no longer relates to modern conditions," has become "inadequate," "obsolete" and therefore "should be revised to reflect Canada's present realities." A citizen in Calgary made this analogy: "We have a constitution which is 100 years old when today in the stores 80 percent of the products that you can buy were not even in existence five years ago." A Torontonian concluded: "The Fathers of Confederation did not have the last word about Canada. Our constitutional arrangements were changed substantially in 1870, 1871, 1873, 1905, 1931 and 1949. . . . What we need now of course is no mere tinkering."

We saw in Part III that "constitutional tinkering" was far from what most francophone Quebecers had in mind when discussing acceptable alternatives to sovereignty-association. Elsewhere, too, a considerable number of participants made it abundantly clear that their region or province also had needs that required "major revision" of the BNA Act. For a Torontonian, patchwork alterations simply could not solve "the present inequalities and sense of frustration" that afflict so many Canadians. The Committee for a New Constitution called the BNA Act an "obsolete barrier," blocking the country's political evolution. This view was echoed by a Saskatchewan Ukrainian group who argued that the structure created 110 years ago "no longer serves the best interests of the country." A speaker in PEI summed up the view of many when she said: "Even if Quebec leaves, we will still need a new constitution."

Some who were anxious to see a completely new constitution were willing to recognize that the existing one had "served Canada well." Their desire to start from scratch was often based on some sort of symbolic value attached to the fact of breaking with the past. A citizen from Winnipeg, for example, said a new constitution would provide "a climate that can make unity a possibility rather than a forlorn hope." Said a letter from Ottawa: "Constitutional revision is not without attractions, if only as an opportunity to create a vivid symbol of the kind of country we are or want to become." A citizen from Port Elgin, N.B., wrote: "To try something new with a chance of success is far better than to continue with something that has been tried but has failed." A Winnipegger declared: "We should reshape our institutions to fit new cultural, economic or political realities." An Ottawan suggested that "a new constitution be devised as a living, inspiring testament to the spirit and determination underlying our national consciousness."

A miracle of statecraft

Many agreed on the need for some constitutional change but not for an entirely new document. To a certain number of Canadians the present constitution is a "miracle of statecraft," "well adapted

“In order to maintain Quebec in Canada, constitutional change which will accommodate Quebec's aspirations is a necessity.”

(Students of St. John High School, in Moncton)

“Patchwork repair on the present BNA would not sufficiently restructure the country and would perpetuate present inequalities and the sense of frustration.”

(Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, in Toronto)

“I feel that major changes in our constitution will provide a climate that can make unity a possibility, rather than a forlorn hope, once again.”

(in Winnipeg)

“Our present constitution is flexible enough to accommodate much of what might reasonably be demanded in a modern federal system.”

(Warner Jorgenson, acting premier of Manitoba, in Winnipeg)

“The need for a major revision in the BNA Act has been blatant for fifteen years. . . . If this had been done ten years ago, I feel that much of the PQ's attractiveness to its electorate would have disappeared.”

(in Vancouver)

“We do not need a change of constitution, what we need is a drastic change in the whole direction of our economy by the federal government. Canadians don't want ten provinces with more powers, they want a strong central government which can direct our economy, our communications, our transportation. A change in constitution is not necessary and a change in constitution will not satisfy the separatists.”

(in Toronto)

“To facilitate the fulfilment of our worthy aspirations, a new modern constitution is vitally and urgently needed, for which the 1972 Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee is an indispensable basis.”

(Senator Paul Yusyk, in Ottawa)

“We need a new constitution. It is not true that the silences of the constitution are the glories of the constitution!”

(in Vancouver)

“There is a serious danger in undertaking a constitutional revision. Once the door is opened to massive constitutional change, it is difficult to close it without great and perhaps destructive revision. When you go about the country seeking opinions on what the constitution ought to be, you impair respect for the law as it now is. It is assumed that the government has decided to change the basic law that underpins the country, and it will be very difficult not to change it.”

(The Law Society of PEI, in Charlottetown)

“The Canadian constitutional crisis must be solved with a “made-in-Canada” constitution that recognizes Canada as a bi-national state.”

(Calgary City Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, in Calgary)

to a country oriented towards the future" and "flexible enough to accommodate much of what might reasonably be demanded in a modern federal system." One told the Commissioners that "we are governed under a 'living constitution', one which has undergone remarkable changes." A group in Halifax called for the "rejuvenation of our federal system."

In fact, confidence that constitutional change would be beneficial was not shared by everyone. On the contrary, some saw possible "danger" in revision — because "we would do no one any particular good, whether inside Quebec or outside Quebec, if we engaged in short-sighted tinkering with our federal structure, perhaps ultimately making the country, as a whole, largely ungovernable." Senator Henry Hicks observed with a smile that a constitutional document is "rarely an impediment when politicians want to do something." A group from B.C. said, "A constitution is written for the centuries. It should not be rewritten in the heat of the moment, no matter how pressing." Senator Eugene Forsey was convinced that "any text you can devise is certain to leave something out or to be so elaborate as to face the judges with daunting problems of interpretation, or both." This to him was but one of the dangers and disadvantages of a written constitution. He lauded the "silences" in the BNA Act as "its greatest glory, because they leave us room to breathe, to innovate . . ." To some, talking about revision "impairs respect for the law as it is now," to use the words of a PEI law group. "Have we realized," asked a professor of political science in Calgary, "that the Canadian constitution is now one of the oldest in the world, that it has been stable enough to provide all Canadians with much political freedom and happiness, yet flexible enough to have changed out of all recognition since 1867?"

A scapegoat

For others, such as Senator Maurice Lamontagne, "the Canadian crisis is not essentially of a constitutional nature." "At this time in our history," added Senator Ike Smith, we must "change the attitudes first, before amending the constitution." For the Alberta Federation of Labour, "constitutional changes, even in the most democratic form, will not solve our problems if our economic foundations continue to crumble." Others reasoned that "national unity is not something that can be legislated," an idea expressed in most cities the Task Force visited. In Winnipeg, for example, the Commissioners were advised: "There is no need to open the BNA Act [in order to make] necessary institutional changes." A professor in Calgary agreed and worried that the constitution is being used "as a scapegoat for social unrest."

Some speakers were sympathetic to the idea of constitutional change but opted against it because "there are several factors which limit the scope of possible change." For a citizen in Montreal, a limiting factor was that "Canadians have not yet developed the proper mentality, the proper attitudes of negotiation." A group in Moncton echoed a similar view when it referred to the difficulties of achieving constitutional reform in the absence of a consensus on "a common understanding of national goals." Two political scientists in Vancouver mentioned, among other limiting factors, the "considerable disagreement regarding the assessment of regional tendencies and identities." It was essential, in their view, to agree first on what changes would be generally acceptable.

“We have had endless discussions over many years of constitutional reform, and we have little to show for all that effort. We have been so caught up in all the individual complexities and dilemmas and trade-offs that we have been frozen into inaction. We have now reached the point where the question must be put, and my motion is that we enlarge our horizon and set aside all the bits and pieces and past wrangles. It is time to have a new constitution.”

(Premier Davis of Ontario, in Toronto)

“It is more important that the central government change its attitudes than undertake changes to the constitution. Arrogance must give way to modesty and verbal invective be replaced by a sympathetic understanding of grievances.”

(in Quebec City)

“The power to interpret the constitution is, as you know, a power of cardinal importance. In terms of constitutional development in Canada, it is much more significant than formal amendments to change the wording of the BNA Act through legislation.”

(in Vancouver)

“National unity is not something that can be legislated.”

(Federal Riding Association of the NDP, in Vancouver)

“There is, as you know, no need to open the BNA Act for revision in order to provide for a new and responsible kind of regional representation in the national government.”

(Canada West Foundation, in Winnipeg)

“There is but one course to follow: patriating the constitution... and doing away with the last remnants of the British tie so that all together we may, for once in our history, be mature enough to take responsibility for our destiny.”

(in Montreal)

“Canada, it is said, is a mature country but sometimes I wonder whether this is true, since we have not been able to agree on the patriation of the constitution.”

(in Montreal)

“We feel that the Canadian Parliament should exert full sovereignty over all constitutional matters and consequently the necessity of petitioning the United Kingdom Parliament regarding amendments of the British North America Act should be terminated as soon as possible, pending full concurrence of all provinces.”

(Canadian Polish Congress, Inc., in Toronto)

“That alternative could include bringing the British North America Act to Canada. But what would we do with it when we got it here? Would we be able to do any better than we have for the last century? As a politician, I suspect the answer is no.”

(Paul Godfrey, in Toronto)

Proposals

Patriation must come

Many speakers believed the first step would be to "patriate" the constitution. This was considered by some to be "an action that all Canadians endorse," "the only way to go." It is time, said the Royal Canadian Legion in Montreal, "for Britain to renounce all jurisdiction over the Canadian constitution." Others considered patriation inevitable: "It must come. . ." Some regretted that "we have not yet been able to agree on patriation. . ." But Senator Henry Hicks warned: "We don't automatically solve the really difficult problems of Canada by patriating the constitution."

Premier Bennett of British Columbia said that "patriation [should] be accompanied by an amending formula," preferably one which gives B.C. its own veto. Premier Davis of Ontario suggested an "amending procedure along the lines of the 1971 Canadian Constitutional Charter," a procedure also endorsed by the Canadian Polish Congress, among many others. A French-speaking Montrealer urged that, in one way or another, a formula of amendment must be found, one that would allow us "to adapt the constitution in years to come without going through periodic crises." Another warned, however, that not all formulas would be acceptable to Quebec. There must be "acceptable guarantees to all member states," he said. Some premiers reminded the Task Force that all premiers had agreed, at their 1976 conference in Toronto, on a list of powers to be transferred to the provinces from Ottawa before patriation would take place.

Leave it to the judges

To some speakers, judicial interpretation was still the most important avenue of constitutional change, short of rewriting the constitution. A few participants cautioned the Task Force against recommending too much "writing down" of constitutional provisions. Excessive detailing could be avoided by accepting customs and conventions as normal elements of a constitution. Conventions could, however, usefully be "formalized." An example would be the federal-provincial conferences of "First Ministers."

The principle of delegation of powers was looked upon favourably by the few experts who touched upon the subject — legislative delegation as a way to effect temporary changes in the distribution of powers for one or more provinces and administrative delegation as a way to avoid duplication of activities by the central and the provincial governments. The advantage of legislative delegation, said a constitutional expert, was that "if the arrangements don't work well, it is relatively easy to change them; while, if the special constitutional status does not work well, the only way to change it is by constitutional amendment, which may take years."

Leave it to the politicians

A good majority of participants saw constitutional change as exclusively a government responsibility. They were looking to negotiations between the prime minister and his advisers, and the provincial premiers and theirs, as the principal means of action in the months to come. Proposals, however, could come from a multitude of sources and the Task Force itself was urged to formulate its own as clearly as possible. Some people recommended that "the prime minister and all provincial premiers assemble a broadly based constitutional conference at which the terms of confederation can be debated." For New Brunswick's Premier Hatfield, constitutional negotiation should be left to political leaders. He urged the Task Force to reject the notion that the problems of Canada are too important to be left to elected politicians. If they do not solve them "they will not be solved at all," he said. Municipal leaders across the country told the Task Force

“... constitutional changes ... are too important to be left solely to politicians. ... I suggest that ... a constituent assembly perhaps best expresses [what we need] — input from all levels and every segment of the community across Canada.”

(in Calgary).

“We call upon the prime minister and all provincial premiers to assemble a broadly-based constitutional conference at which the terms of Confederation can be debated with a view to achieving the modifications necessary to meet the changing needs of a nation now 110 years old.”

(Union of British Columbia Municipalities, in Vancouver)

“In our view, the British North America Act is outmoded as a constitutional document. ... Canada as a federation or union should have a made-in-Canada constitutional document that embodies an amending formula.”

(Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, in Calgary)

“British Columbia favours patriation of the BNA Act so as to place in Canadian hands control over its constitutional development. It would prefer patriation to be accompanied by an amending formula, but if an amending formula cannot be agreed to, then patriation must be accompanied by an express safeguard to provide that any amendments to the constitution of Canada affecting provincial rights would require unanimous approval, until an amending formula is agreed upon.”

(Premier Bennett of British Columbia, in Vancouver)

“We suggest that a constitutional assembly be convened to deal with those matters that are of concern to French Quebecers.”

(in Vancouver)

“A constituent assembly would probably produce not one draft constitution, but a dozen; and if the drafts were submitted to the people, as presumably they would have to be, only by a miracle could bewildered electors return a majority for any one of them. A constituent assembly is a recipe for chaos.”

(Senator Eugene Forsey, in Ottawa)

“The future of Canada depends largely on the willingness of Canadians (and particularly that of those elected to public office at the federal, provincial and municipal levels) to agree to a revision of our constitutional framework to bring it into line with the facts and realities of the times in which we live. Furthermore, we consider a revitalized federalism, founded on a restructured constitution, to be the key solution to Canada's current difficulties, and the hope for its future.”

(The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in Ottawa)

“... the Multicultural Council proposes the convening of a national constitutional assembly. This assembly, empowered to develop a new constitution, should be composed of persons nominated by the federal, the provincial and municipal governments, as well as those from economic, social and cultural organizations.”

(Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, in Toronto)

that the central and provincial governments "must involve Canada's municipalities [in their ongoing] constitutional discussions."

Others called for a "national constitutional conference," very different from traditional federal-provincial conferences which were viewed by one Alberta group as involving "a dangerous and absurd closed doors" practice. The Committee for a New Constitution felt that the conferences had demonstrated their "limitations" for considering "major change." In offering other means than the first ministers' conferences, some participants, such as the French-speaking Teachers Union of Moncton, hoped the Task Force itself could redraft the constitution. The Human Rights Council of British Columbia and the Women's Institute of Nova Scotia wanted a "non-partisan standing commission," an "authorized group," to study and recommend to Parliament how the present constitution should be changed "now" and at "regular intervals." A citizen in Toronto favoured "some institution independent of Parliament which would... be guardian of our constitution and have the power to amend it."

Involve the people

The alternative suggested most often was a constitutional assembly "whose sole aim and function will be to produce a new constitution." Some supporters of the idea of a new constitution foresaw a three-step procedure. First, commissions would "identify the options." Then, a constituent assembly would debate and agree on proposals. Finally, there would be a national referendum to gain public approval. The constituent assembly, according to some participants, would consist of government delegates and representatives from intermediary bodies, and would produce constitutional "resolutions."

A Torontonian proposed "an election for membership in the constitutional assembly." Still others, such as the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County, Ontario, proposed that the members be nominated by the three levels of government "as well as by economic, social and cultural organizations." Some would like to see an assembly based on representation by population. "Input from all levels and every segment of the community across Canada" was seen as vital because "constitutional changes are too important to be left solely to politicians" who, as one Torontonian put it, "can hardly see four years ahead."

To one Vancouverite, the main reason for creating a "constitutional assembly, or a constituent assembly, or a constitutional conference, call it what you will, was that [when] existing institutions are locked in a confrontation, they won't be able to work their way out. After all, the constitutions of most of the western nations have been drafted pursuant to a constitutional assembly." But Senator Forsey described a constituent assembly as "a recipe for chaos" which would produce "a dozen draft constitutions and only by a miracle could the bewildered electors return a majority for any one of them."

A referendum to gain the approval of Canadians for a new constitution was another popular proposal: "A new constitution should be submitted, not to the legislatures or to the Parliament of Canada, but rather to the people of Canada in a referendum in each province." The Committee for a New Constitution proposed that a draft constitution be prepared by a constituent assembly and then submitted "to public approval in a referendum." It should be held, in their view, "before the Quebec referendum." For a Montrealer, if the provinces and the central government do not reach an agreement, Ottawa would unilaterally present a draft and ask the whole country to approve it. But one Quebec political group felt that agreements among first ministers should precede the referendum and that the referendum should be adopted by a majority in all provinces. The Committee for a New Constitution felt that popular confirmation would require double majorities: approval in both Quebec and English-speaking Canada.

“When you go back to Ottawa, tell our national leaders that from sea to sea you have found a people who thirst today for a challenge to prove their national character and greatness and who wish to see raised in Canada a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. In this regard, the people of Canada are light years ahead of their political leaders.”

(in Vancouver)

Conclusion

Although there was, among those who spoke to the Task Force, a variety of views on the nature and kind of constitutional change needed, there was clearly a widespread consensus that the resolution of Canada's problems will require changes in the political and constitutional framework. For the most part, the public expressed a continued faith in the political leaders of Canada's governments to arrive at agreement upon the necessary changes, but with this was coupled a sense of growing impatience with the lack of progress to date and hints that unless there were soon signs of achievement, there would be a rising demand for an alternative and more effective way of securing a new or substantially revised constitution.

The Canadian public has used *A Time to Speak* to demand action to redress the political, economic and social dimensions of the unity crisis.

P.C. 1977-1910

Certified to be a true copy of a Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on the 5 July, 1977

The Committee of the Privy Council, having had before it a report of the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the Prime Minister, concerning Canadian unity, advise that

The Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin of Ottawa, Ontario

The Honourable John Parmenter Robarts of Toronto, Ontario

Mr. Richard Cashin of St. John's, Newfoundland

Dr. John Evans of Toronto, Ontario

Mrs. Muriel Kovitz of Calgary, Alberta

Mayor Ross Marks of Hundred Mile House, British Columbia

be appointed Commissioners under Part I of the Inquiries Act to enquire into questions relating to Canadian unity. During the course of their inquiry, the Commissioners shall

- a) hold public hearings and sponsor public meetings to ascertain the views of interested organizations, groups and individuals;
- b) work to support, encourage, and publicize the efforts of the general public, and particularly those of non-governmental organizations, with regard to Canadian unity;
- c) contribute to the knowledge and general awareness of the public the initiatives and views of the Commissioners concerning Canadian unity;
- d) assist in the development of processes for strengthening Canadian unity and be a source of advice to the government on unity issues; and
- e) enquire into any other matter concerning national unity that may be referred to the Commission by His Excellency in Council.

The Committee further advise that the Commissioners

- a) be known as the Task Force on Canadian Unity;
- b) be authorized to exercise all of the powers conferred upon them by section 11 of the Inquiries Act and be assisted to the fullest extent by departments and agencies;
- c) adopt such procedures and methods as they may from time to time deem expedient for the proper conduct and conclusion of the inquiry within one year and sit at such times and in such places in Canada as they may decide from time to time;
- d) be authorized to engage the services of such counsel, staff and technical advisers as they may require at rates of remuneration and reimbursement to be approved by the Treasury Board;
- e) file with the Dominion Archivist the papers and records of the Commission forthwith after the conclusion of the inquiry; and
- f) that the Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin and the Honourable John Parmenter Robarts be designated as Co-Chairmen of the Commission.

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P.M. PITFIELD

CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL – LE GREFFIER DU CONSEIL PRIVÉ

P.C. 1977-2361

Certified to be a true copy of a Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on the 24 August, 1977

The Committee of the Privy Council, on the recommendation of the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the Prime Minister, advise that Mrs. Solange Chaput-Rolland, of the City of Montreal, in the Province of Quebec, be appointed a Commissioner, under Part I of the Inquiries Act, of the Commission of inquiry into questions relating to Canadian Unity, known as the Task Force on Canadian Unity, established by Order in Council P.C. 1977-1910 of 5th July, 1977.

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY – COPIE CERTIFIÉE CONFORME

P.M. PITFIELD

CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL – LE GREFFIER DU CONSEIL PRIVÉ

P.C. 1977-2362

Certified to be a true copy of a Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on the 24 August, 1977

The Committee of the Privy Council, on the recommendation of the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the Prime Minister, advise that Mr. Gérald A. Beaudoin, of the City of Hull, in the Province of Quebec, be appointed a Commissioner, under Part I of the Inquiries Act, of the Commission of inquiry into questions relating to Canadian Unity, known as the Task Force on Canadian Unity, established by Order in Council P.C. 1977-1910 of 5th July, 1977.

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P.M. PITFIELD

CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL – LE GREFFIER DU CONSEIL PRIVÉ

P.C. 1978-573

Certified to be a true copy of a Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General on the 28 February, 1978

The Committee of the Privy Council, on the recommendation of the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the Prime Minister, advise that Dr. Ronald L. Watts of Kingston, Ontario, be appointed a Commissioner, under Part I of the Inquiries Act, of the Commission of inquiry into questions relating to Canadian Unity, known as the Task Force on Canadian Unity, established by Order in Council P.C. 1977-1910 of 5th July, 1977, vice Dr. John Evans whose resignation has been accepted.

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY – COPIE CERTIFIÉE CONFORME

P.M. PITFIELD

CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL – LE GREFFIER DU CONSEIL PRIVÉ

MANDATE

The mandate of the Task Force on Canadian Unity has three basic elements:

- a) "To support, encourage and publicize the efforts of the general public and particularly those of (voluntary) organizations, with regard to Canadian unity";
- b) "To contribute the initiatives and views of the Commissioners concerning Canadian unity";
- c) "To advise the Government (of Canada) on unity issues."

INTRODUCTION

The Task Force is committed to a Canadian federation, a system with the authority of the state shared by two orders of government, each sovereign and at the same time committed to cooperative association with the other, under a constitution. We believe that such a system is the one best suited to the diversity of our founding peoples and to the nature of our geographic, social and economic environments.

The Task Force also recognizes that Canada and its present federal system are under great stress. The creation of the Task Force is itself a testimony to this. All regions of Canada are reflecting and expressing this malaise. The most pressing questions are being raised in Quebec and the Task Force intends to give these high priority. Nevertheless, the concerns of other regions are vitally important and will be given our full attention.

The Task Force has been given a clear mandate by the Government to develop its own initiatives and ideas and we intend to do this. It is our intention to assemble concepts and policies which could constitute some of the elements of a third option for Canada. The Members of the Task Force do not feel bound by existing legislation and practices nor are they committed to views of any federal or provincial political party. Our mandate requires us to advise the Government and we will do so but we will also make our views public, not seeking conflict with any groups, but aware that our autonomy is essential to our credibility and usefulness.

We intend to function in a spirit of receptiveness and conciliation. We will work closely with the Canadian people. Throughout the period of our mandate, we intend to carry on a conversation with citizens of all regions and with experts in all disciplines, listening, attempting to understand, discussing both old and new concepts. We will be mindful of and will solicit the views of the federal and all provincial governments.

In accordance with our mandate, we intend to listen to and provide a forum for those associations of all kinds which are specifically searching for the terms of a better Canada. Such efforts represent a spontaneous and generous spirit which must be encouraged and which can provide Canadians with a very useful instrument for the consideration of our problems.

The Task Force will learn a great deal from these organizations and will give particular encouragement to those who wish to think about changes which can improve our political, social and economic systems. We will encourage such policy formation in every way and particularly through the provision of speakers and publications which might stimulate discussion.

ACTIVITIES OF THE TASK FORCE

Within the period of our mandate and within the overall framework of a dialogue with the Canadian people, we intend to do four things. To some extent, these activities will be taking place concurrently.

First, we intend to listen and attempt to understand the real concerns of all Canadians on the functioning of our social, economic and political institutions as they relate to our mandate.



Secondly, while we recognize the existence of tensions and the need for reforms, we intend to point out the positive aspects of the Canadian experience, both material and emotional, its flexibility and its potential for improvement under the pressure of enlightened public awareness.

Thirdly, we hope to be able to inform the Canadian people effectively about the complex issues at stake in creating a more satisfying country. We propose to clarify the options available and the advantages and disadvantages related to them.

Fourthly, we intend to make recommendations for changes in structures, concepts and attitudes which are required in order to make our Canadian institutions more consistent with the needs of our times.

TIMETABLE

During the early months of the life of the Task Force, the emphasis will be on listening. We intend to visit centers in all the Canadian provinces to discuss the issues, face to face, with the public. In this way, we will acquire a greater sensitivity to the current opinions and feelings of Canadians. Concurrently, the staff of the Task Force will be studying and analyzing the key issues in the unity debate in order to prepare background papers on some major aspects of our current problems and the range of possible improvements which might be made.

During the second phase of the Task Force's work the emphasis will be on study and consultation with specialists. The Task Force and its staff will discuss the issues in an attempt to assemble concepts and policies which will provide Canadians with some new directions. Concurrently with this period of study, the Task Force intends to publish information papers on important issues for the Canadian people outlining the options which are available.

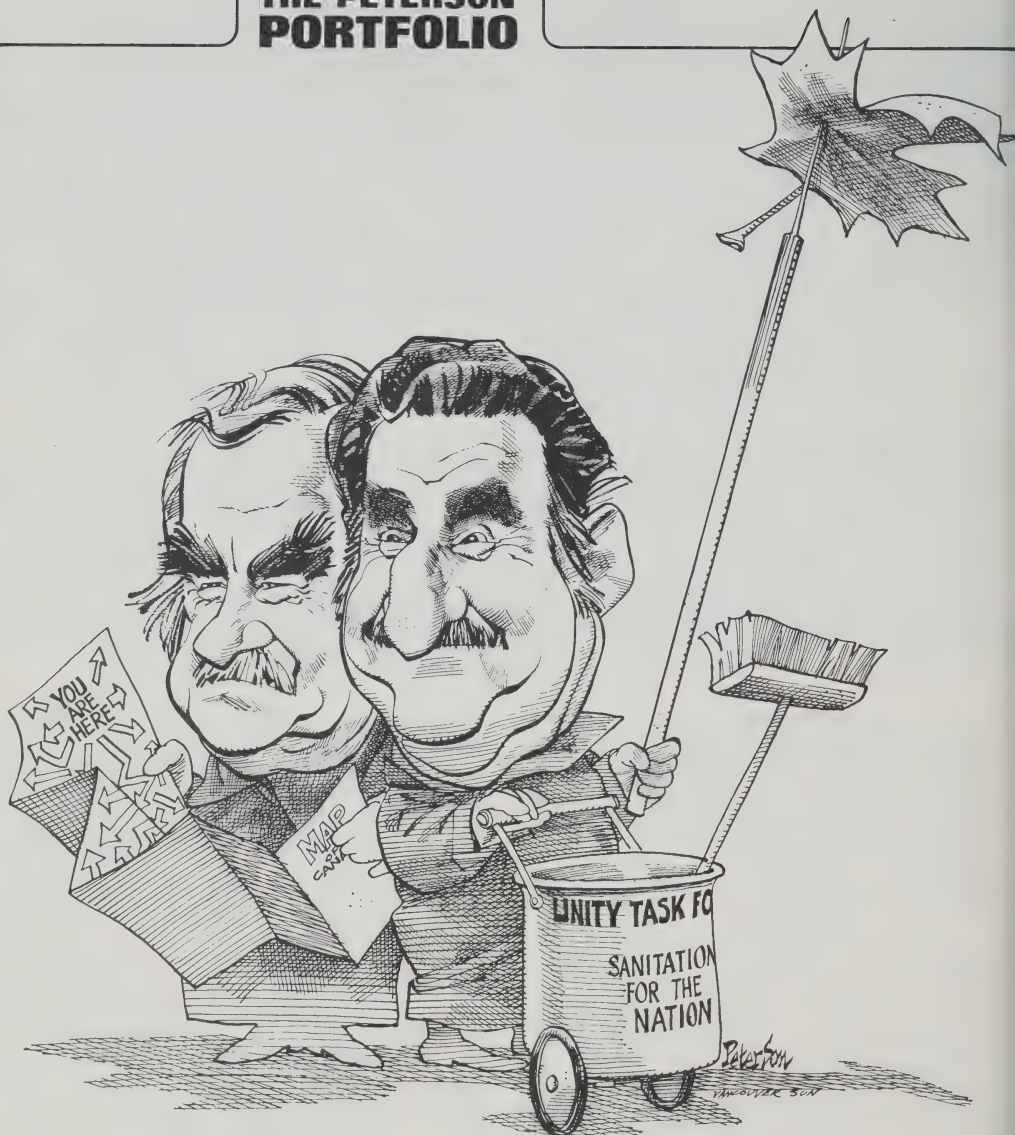
During the third and final period of the Task Force's life, the Members plan to integrate their views and propose objectives and policies to the Government of Canada and to the Canadian people for their consideration.

The Task Force expects, in the months ahead, to make a contribution to a better understanding and resolution of our current problems. Where these problems are more perceived than real, we intend to promote understanding. Where they are more real than perceived, we intend to promote change.

And we earnestly ask for the understanding and support of our fellow citizens.

September 1, 1977.

THE PETERSON PORTFOLIO



“To identify our problems and to struggle with them is an important part of their solution. The Task Force is helping ordinary Canadians to do that: who knows what good may come from this process as we talk with one another about our unusual and fascinating country, our nation ‘pas comme les autres’? I wish you the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job — and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit.”

(in Charlottetown)

“If it hadn’t been for November 15, 1976, there certainly wouldn’t have been a Pepin-Robarts Task Force, which proves that this monster created by Ottawa stands only for deceit, double-dealing, underhandedness and hypocrisy. The best proof of this is that from the very beginning any recommendations for Quebec’s independence were completely ruled out. This means that as far as Quebec is concerned, your Task Force is totally useless. Behind your enigmatic and anxious smiles, I can feel Ottawa’s armed forces and the really pathetic RCMP. I would really like to be able to show you up and in one fell swoop.”

(in Montreal)

“As a citizen of Canada, I appreciate very much the opportunity to express my opinions at a public forum such as this. I think it’s something that perhaps should be done a little more often to give us a chance to express our views.”

(in Edmonton)

“It’s a really evil joke, because what’s hiding behind it is a plot against the people of Quebec and against the whole Canadian population.”

(in Montreal)

“While I am generally a sceptic when it comes to royal commissions and inquiries, and have little hope that whatever I have said tonight will in any way change the political situation here, I felt that I had to grab this opportunity to have a voice from the north heard in the halls of Parliament.”

(in the Yukon)

“We believe that the primary role of this Task Force and of the Liberal government in general, is to drive the wedge deeper between French and English working people, using the myth of ethnic nationalism to obscure that fact that recent events in Quebec are reflecting in large measure a class struggle.”

(Quebec Education and Defence Committee, in Vancouver)

“Originally I came here not to speak but to listen. I came here to listen to the mood of our country, as represented here, and of my city and of my province.”

(in Montreal)

“To deny the right of self-determination to the people of Quebec . . . to deny the equality of the minorities and the equality of the languages of this country: that’s basically the work of the Task Force. But the workers and the Canadian people are well aware that it’s all just a big show like the ones we were treated to on the first of July and on the 25th anniversary of the CBC.”

(in Montreal)

“I believe that the Task Force will take back an impartial message. . . . I believe it is an impartial organization.”

(in Vancouver)

“I feel that the Task Force in itself is a means of perpetuating a phony issue. It keeps this non-issue before the public. The only issue that can be said to divide this country is economics.”

(in Toronto)

“Standing here before a task force such as this one, which has been much criticized, I, for one, cannot but feel pride in giving my point of view and I can also feel proud listening to those who oppose it state why they disagree. That, to me, is simply what true democracy is all about and probably provides us with the best possible example of the democratic process.”

(in Montreal)

“... a planned diversion for the Canadian people, a mechanism whereby the federal government can appear to be doing something, while continuing to ignore the basic problems that led to the present situation in Quebec.”

(Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, in Regina)

“I hope I haven't taken up too much of your time but, as you see, I'm on crutches. I made a special effort to get here because Canada means a lot to me.”

(in St. John's)

“... for the fraud that the hearings really are. . . . nothing but a hoax. They haven't been organized to deal with any of the very real problems which we have to face, problems such as inflation, rising prices and our increasing impoverishment as workers.”

(in Toronto)

“My prayer, in closing, is that I hope this Task Force will keep up the good work and try to get the message — a message of goodwill — past the demagogues and past the sneaky politicians' fight, and right into the homes of our good neighbours who live in Quebec.”

(in Toronto)

“Quite obviously the whole purpose of this is to provide a forum for the build-up of a campaign of hysteria against the Québécois.”

(in Toronto)

“I feel very lonely up here because I don't belong to any particular group. I'm a worker. I pay my taxes so we can have this kind of thing but I think it's worth it.”

(in Toronto)

“The Canadian government only set up this Task Force in order to make it look as if they really care about the interests of Quebecers and Canadians in general.”

(in Toronto)

“I feel that the Task Force on Canadian Unity is a good idea. I just hope it's not too late.”

(in Vancouver)

“This Task Force is but another cog in the enormous propaganda machine set up by the Canadian bourgeoisie to deny the Quebec nation the right to self-determination.”

(in Montreal)

“Next, I'd like to join the many who have already expressed their recognition of the courage and self-sacrifice — and it sounds a little trite, it sounds like flattery, I suppose — to the members of the Task Force who have . . . submitted themselves to public abuse for the purpose of trying to sort out some of our nation's problems.”

(in Vancouver)

“This Task Force is just a smokescreen, a lot of humbug to make a shaky Confederation look good.”

(in Montreal)

“I do put a lot of trust in your Task Force but I can't help but wonder whether, since it has been set up, formed and is being paid for by the federal government, it can objectively and honestly study the situation. Is the purpose of the Task Force to keep Quebec within Confederation at any cost, or is it to analyze the situation without bias and to ask whether separation might not be a better solution, for all Canadians, than a conflictual situation such as that we now have. Couldn't we live in harmony as neighbours in the same way that English and French can live side by side right here in the province of Quebec?”

(in Quebec City)

“The Roberts Task Force, as I see it, is the carrot and then the stick, that's Benson and his army. It's like the two sides of the same coin, first the carrot and then the stick.”

(in Montreal)

“Two minutes is rather short but I would still like to use fifteen seconds of it to say, on behalf of most of the people here, how extremely grateful we all are to the members of this committee, of this Task Force, for the great patience, dignity and courage they have shown ever since this inquiry began.”

(in Montreal)

“Why is it that people have so little faith in these great saviours of national unity, who have this lofty ideal of saving the country? I think it's quite clear that the people see these 'guys' for what they are: moneybag billionaires, sell-out labour aristocrats, some professional prostitute, and some hiring scribbler. If I've forgotten somebody, I'm sorry. They see that this gang has no interest whatsoever in the real unity of the Canadian people, they have an interest in fermenting disunity in the service of one section of the ruling class in Canada — the section headed by Trudeau which is waging a dog fight against another section of the rich, headed by Lévesque.”

(in Montreal)

“I would like to thank the Pepin-Roberts Task Force for allowing the people to express their point of view. If all that was said — all the ideas presented are to remain a dead letter issue, then this will all have been but for naught. However, if, on the contrary, each one of us gains understanding and dispels the mist that lies before his eyes, then we will have contributed to the unity of Canada.”

(in Montreal)

“You think you are doing some good, but your are not. Who listens? Who really listens? You think you do, but nothing will come of it. Nothing will.”

(in Toronto)

“The purpose of this Task Force will certainly help to promote understanding and we, as students, hope to see much more of the same in the future.”

(in Calgary)

“Why aren’t those who have the power to change the situation that creates a disturbance here instead of you? Perhaps they have decided to enjoy their Parliament Hill cocktail parties.”

(in Vancouver)

“The main benefit of your Task Force will be to have allowed the greatest possible number of Canadians to express themselves on this question of Canadian unity and to have contributed, we hope, to making the public more aware of the need for basic changes in Confederation as it now stands.”

(in Moncton)

“You know, what’s happening is that the Liberal government has an election coming up and it’s a good chance to campaign on national unity, which is the hot issue right now. But . . . solving unemployment, runaway inflation and the lack of human rights in this country — that is what’s going to keep this country together, nothing else.”

(in Vancouver)

“I came here today to participate in this Task Force [hearing] because as far as I’m concerned it’s the first worthwhile attempt made by the federal government to unite Canada since they built the railroad to link the Atlantic to the Pacific.”

(in Moncton)

“I had reservations about participating in this show but, after having been told by the media that our economic problem is the results of my living too high off the hog, and the Quebec problem is the result of my not learning French, I come to seek out the real culprits of our malaise.”

(in Winnipeg)

“I would like you to say to all those individuals who get up here and suggest solutions to the Task Force that they should go back into the community, join a political party and help make the political system work.”

(in Calgary)

“I’m here tonight and this whole thing strikes me as a bit of ‘Billy Graham preaching’ and I’m wondering about any report produced by the panel in front of us. Will you express any dissenting opinions? I seriously doubt that. Mr. Pepin, you’re a Liberal, your party is Trudeauist. I seriously doubt you’re going to print any dissenting opinions and the same goes for the rest of the panel.”

(in Vancouver)

“For any person to be asked to come to a meeting and take three minutes, or five minutes, or seven minutes and summarize even one rational, intelligent idea that will help the federal government, is a direct insult and a fraud. We resent it very much but it is typical of Ottawa.”

(in Winnipeg)

“The Canada-Quebec issues have existed for almost 110 years and if, at last, the federal government wants to hear what the public really thinks about it, it should have arranged to conduct a proper inquiry, an inquiry of the status and calibre of the Berger Inquiry, instead of a series of rallies across the country.”

(in Winnipeg)

“By scheduling only one evening for the public in Winnipeg and only five minutes for each participant, and now only three — in my opinion you have come close to reducing the inquiry to the [level of] the theatre of the absurd.”

(in Winnipeg)

“We have a government which deals with a separatist threat by sending sixty highly paid people, living in luxury hotels, on a tour of Canada, to see how much the average citizen can say in five minutes.”

(in Winnipeg)

“It’s my money and that of Quebecers that’s paying for this evening and I don’t like this kind of joke; it may be amusing but it’s expensive.”

(in Toronto)

Appendix D Individuals and groups presenting briefs

Calgary

Alberta Ballet Company
Alberta Union of Provincial
Employees, The
Alberta Youth Project, The
American Indian Movement, The
Association of Professional Engineers,
Geologists and Geophysicists
of Alberta, The
Bercuson, David J.
Calgary Chamber of Commerce
Calgary City Committee of the Communist
Party of Canada
Calgary Inter-Faith Community Action
Committee
Calgary Performing Arts Council
Canadian Bar Association — Alberta
Branch
Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Canadian Economics Association,
University of New Brunswick
Canadian Parents for French — Alberta
Branch
Canadian Petroleum Association
Carbert, Blair
Chetner, Don
David, Edgar H.
Dominion of Canada Party
Elton, David K.
Ernest Manning High School
Ferguson, Edward
Fitzpatrick
Gibbins, Roger
Goodhart, Rupert
Harris, Alfred L.
Hawley, Dorothy
John G. Diefenbaker High School
Kinley, Heather
Local Council of Women
MacKinnon, Frank
Martini, Catherine
McDonald, Patrick N.
Moon, Robert
Mowers, Cleo W.
Owen, Gary A.S.
Owen, Joan A.
Parsons, R.A.
Rasporich, A.W.
Roome, Patricia A.
Sarcee Indian Reserve
Scout, Warner

Seastone, D.A.
Sharma, Prabhat
Shirt, Eric
Shore, Michael
Sir Alexander of Tunis, Unit 2 — Army,
Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada
Société franco-canadienne de Calgary (La)
Some Students from the University of
Calgary
Stamp, Robert M.
Stoney Coalition for Indian Justice, The
Stoney Indian Tribe, (the Wesley Band)
Truswell, J.L.
Truswell, R.J.
United Calgary Chinese Association
Warren, Janet
Williams, M.M.
Willison, Gladys A.
Wood, Norris L.

Charlottetown

Alliance for the Preservation of English in
Canada
Campbell, Alex B. — former premier of
Prince Edward Island
Canadian Home & School & Parent-
Teachers' Federation
Charlottetown Christian Council
Charlottetown Rotary Club
Cowan, Keith
Diocesan Church Society of Prince Edward
Island
Driscoll, Frederick
Federated Women's Institute of Prince
Edward Island, The
Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of
Commerce, The
Greater Summerside Chamber of
Commerce, The
Ozmon, Kenneth L.
Prince Edward Island Branch of the
Commonwealth Society
Prince Edward Island Council of the Arts
Prince Edward Island Council of the Law
Society
Prince Edward Island Federation of
Agriculture
Prince Edward Island Federation of
Municipalities
Prince Edward Island Human Rights
Commission

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Prince Edward Island Multicultural Council, The
Prince Edward Island Public Service Association, Inc.
Prince Edward Island Travel Industry Association
Rural Development Council of Prince Edward Island, The
Société des Acadiens de l'Île du Prince-Edouard: La Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin (La)
Spira, Dr. Thomas
Students' Course Union and Faculty of the Department of Political Science, University of Prince Edward Island
Vincent, Ronald

Edmonton

Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, The
Alberta Federation of Labour
Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, The
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, (L')
Association of Independent Schools & Colleges in Alberta
Byrne, T.C.
Canada West Foundation
Canadian Bar Association — Alberta Constitutional and International Law Subsection
Canadian Education Content Committee of the Unified Canada Movement
Canadian Parents for French
Canadian Studies Committee, University of Alberta
Card, B.Y.
Chambers, E.J. and Dunn, M.J.
Cruse, Don
Davy, Grant R.
Edmonton & District Council of Churches
Edmonton Catholic School Board, The
Edmonton Public School Board, The
Fossum, Lynn S.
Francophonie Jeunesse
Gendron, Jacques R.
Grant MacEwan Community College
Harries, Hu
Horton, E.R. Ted
Hunter, Bruce

Hurtig, Mel
Indian Association of Alberta
Jenson, Paul Andrew
Kilgour, David
Knutson, E.S.
Lavers, J.F.
Métis Association of Alberta
Parents' Advisory Council, The
Pickett, John L. Jack
Skirrow, Stan
Students' Union/External Affairs board
Ukrainian Bilingual Association
Ukrainian Canadian Committee, Edmonton branch
Visitation Crusade Incorporated
Weinlos, Morris, M.D., Western National Association
Williamson, David T.

Halifax

Acadiens du Cap-Breton (Les)
Atlantic Institute of Education
Atlantic Provinces Economic Council
Black Educators' Association
Black United Front of Nova Scotia
Braybrooke, David
Canadian Seafood & Allied Workers' Union
Cheong, George
Chinese Society of Nova Scotia, The
Clarke, Rick
Committee of Dalhousie Law Students
Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (La)
Goldbloom, Richard
Greek Community of Halifax
Halifax Board of Trade
Halifax Grammar School
Hankey, W.J.
Hicks, Senator Henry
Holmes, Jeffrey
Italo-Canadian Cultural Association of Halifax-Dartmouth
Jeunes Acadiens en Marche
Johnson, Joseph W.
Kirby, Tory
Lunenburg County Ratepayers Association
Lunenburg Junior-Senior High School
MacCormack, John R.
Mancini, Peter
McFadyen, Fraser

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Micmac Association of Cultural Studies
Nova Scotia Association for the
Advancement of Coloured People
Nova Scotia Command of the Royal
Canadian Legion, The
Nova Scotia Federation of Labour
Nova Scotia Legal Community, The
Nova Scotia Teachers Union, The
Prince Andrew High School
Queen Elizabeth High School Students
Schmidt, W.
Smith, Senator G.I.
Sydney Academy
Université Sainte-Anne
Warrington, M.G.
West Kings District High School
Winter, Ralph
Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia

Hull

Addison, Brad
Hodgson, Ralph
Mouvement Québec-Canada — Section
Aylmer — (L')
Mouvement Québec-Canada, Sections de
Hull et de la Basse-Gatineau (Le)
Noël, Simon
Servant, Jacques D.

Moncton

Acadian Commandery of the Military and
Hospitalier Order of St. Lazarus of
Jerusalem, The
Activités-Jeunesse
Anderson, John M.
Association des enseignants francophones
du Nouveau Brunswick
Association générale des étudiants du
centre universitaire Saint-Louis
Maillet (L')
Assomption compagnie mutuelle
d'assurance-vie
Atlantic Community Newspapers
Association
Atlantic Provinces Chamber of Commerce
Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, The
Belliveau, John Edward
Canadian Parents for French
Chiasson, Donat
Citizens of the Greater Moncton Area in
Collaboration with the Department of

Social Action of the Anglican Diocese of
Fredericton
Conseil de promotion et de diffusion de la
culture (Le)
Conseil des États généraux de
l'Acadie (Le)
Dominion of Canada English-Speaking
Association
Duguay, Henri-Eugène
Étudiants de l'École polyvalente Clément-
Cormier (Les)
Fédération des associations foyer-école
du Nouveau-Brunswick Ltée
Fédération des caisses populaires
acadiennes limitée (La)
Fédération des dames d'Acadie (La)
Forum Association of New Brunswick, The
Fredericton Chamber of Commerce
Gayne, John H.
Greater Moncton Chamber of
Commerce, The
Grogner, Frédéric
Grossman, Edward
Hatfield, Richard — premier of New
Brunswick
Identica Inc.
Institut de Memramcook (L')
Israeli, Julius
Jones, Leonard, MP
Leblanc, Louis-Félix
Lynch, Nelson G.
Multiculturalism Association of Fredericton
New Brunswick Association of Metis and
Non-Status Indians, The
New Brunswick Federation of Labour
New Brunswick Human Rights
Commission
New Brunswick Industrial Developers
Association, Inc.
New Brunswick Teachers' Association
New Brunswick Telephone Company, Ltd.
Parti Acadien
Richelieu-Moncton, The
St. John Board of Trade
Savoie, Fernand
Société des acadiens du Nouveau
Brunswick (La)
Students of History 121 at Fredericton
High School
Students of Political Science 1-2000, Sec.
1, University of New Brunswick
Students of Saint John High School

Union coopérative acadienne (L')
Union of New Brunswick Indians
Université de Moncton
Young Women's Christian Association

Montreal

Alcan Aluminium Limitée (L')
Allaire, Yvan
Allard, Robert
Anglican Church of Canada, The
Arnopoulos, Sheila
Association du camionnage du Québec Inc. (L')
Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale — Fédération Montréal — St-Jerome — Outaouais (L')
Bishop, John
Bishop, Martha
Bishop's University
Black Community Central Administration
Brooker, W.M.A.
Brosseau, Gérard
Business Linguistic Centre
Central des syndicats démocratiques (La)
Centre des dirigeants d'entreprise
Chénier, Joseph A.
Chambre de Commerce de la province du Québec (La)
Comité "Canada Republique"
Ciaccia, John, MP
Comité pour le gouvernement communautaire
Commission Jeunesse du PLC de Laval-des-Rapides
Committee for Community Government
Commitment Canada/Engagement Canada
Comité de l'unité canadienne de l'Ordre Militaire et Hospitalier de St-Lazare de Jérusalem
Communist Party of Quebec
Concordia University
Conférence des évêques catholiques du Canada
Congrès national des Italo-Canadiens — région Québec
Conseil de la coopération du Québec (Le)
Conseil des Hommes d'affaires Québécois (Le)
Conseil du Civisme de Montréal (Le)
Consolidated-Bathurst Ltd.
Council for Canadian Unity — Quebec Section — The
Décary, Robert
Decision Canada
De Grandpré, A.J.
Deyasi, Ajoy
Dor, Georges
Dufour, Benoît
Dydzak, Joseph John
Eastern Township Citizen Association
École des hautes études commerciales
Federation of Ethnic Groups of Quebec, Inc.
Fédération des syndicats du secteur aluminium Inc.
Fédération italienne des travailleurs émigrés et familles (La)
Finestone, Bernard, J.
Fontaine, Jean-Marc
Gaucher, Michel
Gaudreau, Maurice
Grand conseil de la nation Huronne (Le)
Groupement québécois d'entreprises Inc. (Le)
Impact Quebec
Inuit of Quebec, The
Institut politique de Trois-Rivières (L')
Jacomy-Millette, Anne-Marie
King, Paul-Francis Michel
Lacasse, Jean-Paul
Lamarche, Gustave
LaSalle, Roch, MP
Latouche, Daniel
Laurin, Jean
Ledoux, Gérard
Legault, Fortunat
Les amis de Chénier
Liaison Group
Martucci, Jean
McGill University
McKinnon, K.K.
Melançon, Jacques
Montreal Board of Trade
Montreal Council of Women, The
Mouvement Réformiste Social
New Democratic Party — Quebec
Paquette, Gilles
Parent, Guy G.
Parti de libération du Québec (Le)
Participation Quebec
Patenaude, Pierre

Appendix D

- Pépin, Gilles
Perron, Roselyne
Pinard, Maurice
Poissant, C.A.
Positive Action Committee, The
Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, The
Productions Modula Son Enr. (Les)
Proulx, Gilles
Provincial Association of Catholic Teachers
Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers
Provincial Council of University Women's Clubs
Quebec Committee for Language Regions, The
Quebec Federation of Home & School Associations
Quebec Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion
Quebec Physiatrists Association
Roback, Gordon
Roberts, Leslie
Roy, Lucille
Rumilly, Robert
Ryerson, Stanley-Bréhaut
St. Huberts's Base Teachers' Association, The
Sauvé, René Marcel
Sciascia, Antonio
Scott, Stephen
Société nationale populaire du Québec (La)
Teller, Luc-Normand
Tisseyre, Pierre
Thompson, Dale C.
Trépanier, Paul-O. — mayor of Granby
Tremblay, André
Vallée, Louis Léonce
Vennat, Manon
Vennat, Michel
Whitley, Barbara
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, The
Bilingual Exchange Secretariat, The
Business Council on National Issues, The
Canada Council, The
Canada Studies Foundation, The
Canadian Association for Adult Education
Canadian Association of Broadcasters, The
Canadian Bankers' Association, The
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
Canadian Chamber of Commerce, The
Canadian Community Newspaper Association, The
Canadian Conference of the Arts
Canadian Council of Christians and Jews
Canadian Hostelling Association
Canadian Human Rights Commission
Canadian Manufacturers' Association, The
Canadian Museums' Association
Canadian National
Canadian Pacific Ltd.
Canadian Parents for French (National Organization)
Canadian School Trustees' Association, The
Canadian Teachers' Federation, The
Committee for a New Constitution, The — Steering Committee
Council of Canadian Filmmakers, The
Education Canada
Fédération des francophones hors Québec (La)
Fédération des jeunes Canadiens-Français
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Forsey, Senator Eugene
Forum Association
Goldenberg, Senator H. Carl
Group of Concerned Quebec Labour Officials
Heritage Canada
Inuit Tapirisat of Canada
Investment Dealers Association of Canada
Lamontagne, Senator Maurice
Loyal Orange Association of Canada
National Council of Jewish Women of Canada
National Council of YMCAs of Canada, The
National Film Board, The
National Indian Brotherhood
- Ottawa**
Air Canada
All About Us Canada Inc.
Alliance for Bilingualism
Association of Canadian Community Colleges
Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française

National Union of Students
 National Voluntary Organizations
 Native Council of Canada
 Pépin, Marcel
 Presse (La)
 Royal Canadian Legion, The
 Telemedia Communications Ltd. & T.V.
 Guide Ltd./Ltée
 Toronto Star, The
 Travel Industry Association of
 Canada, The
 Via Rail Canada Inc.
 Yuzyk, Senator Paul

Quebec City

Boivin, Florian
 Dion, Gérard
 Dion, Léon
 Fortin, Pierre
 Lemieux, Vincent
 Lortie, Roland
 Parti libéral du Québec
 Parti national populaire
 Ralliement créditiste du Québec
 Union nationale (L')

Regina

Adams, Susan
 Advisory Committee for the Bilingual
 Centre
 Archer, John H.
 Association culturelle Franco-Canadienne
 de la Saskatchewan (L')
 Association des commissaires d'écoles
 Franco-Canadiens de la
 Saskatchewan (L')
 Association jeunesse Fransaskoise de la
 Saskatchewan (L')
 Association of Metis and Non-status
 Indians of Saskatchewan
 Association of United Ukrainian Canadians
 of Saskatchewan
 Belcher, Margaret
 Blakeney, Allan, premier of Saskatchewan
 Canadian Federation France-Canada, The
 Canadian Federation of University
 Women, The
 Central Collegiate Students
 College Mathieu, The Corporation
 & Staff of

College Mathieu, The Executive
 Committee of the Corporation of
 Collier, Dick
 Ecoles désignées de Gravelbourg et le
 cercle local de l'association culturelle
 Franco-Canadienne (Les)
 Evangelical Ministers Fellowship
 Federation of Saskatchewan Indians
 Genuist, Paul
 Herle, Wendelin A.
 Holle, Erich
 Keyes, Thomas E.
 Kindrachuk, Mike
 LaMontagne, Mrs. Marlene
 MacLeod, Brian
 Malone, Ted (leader of the Liberal party of
 Saskatchewan)
 Massey School Bilingual Programme —
 Parents' Association
 Monarchist League of Canada, The
 Petrucka, Pamela M.
 Petry, Lucien A.
 Prendergast, Monica
 Rainey, B.E.
 Regina Board of Education
 Regina Chamber of Commerce
 Regina Council of Women
 Richert, Keith M.
 Royal Canadian Legion — Saskatchewan
 Command
 Royal Society of St. George, The — Regina
 Branch
 Saskatchewan Association of Rural
 Municipalities
 Saskatchewan Chamber of
 Commerce, The
 Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture
 Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, The
 Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities
 Association
 Saskatchewan Women's Institutes
 Scott, Len & Jackie
 Shaw, Don E.
 Shumiatcher, Morris
 St. Nicholas Roumanian Orthodox Youth
 Straile, Inge
 Students of Martin Collegiate Institute
 Swift Current Public School District No.
 167
 Szekely, Robert
 Taylor, H.E., — mayor of Moose Jaw
 Toombs, Wil

Ukrainian Canadian Committee, Regina
branch
Wilhelm, Christopher
Williams, C.M.

St. John's

Alexander, David
Apache International Corporation
Baird, Ian
Blackwood, Paul
Canadian Federation of University Women,
Committee of the St. John's Club
Clark, Roger
Cole, Harvey W.
Corner Brook Status of Women Council
Crapaud, H.
Davis, Sally
Earl, Fred
Fédération des francophones de Terre-
Neuve et du Labrador
Harbour Grace Board of Trade
Harrington, Michael
Harris, Elmer
Lewisporte Chamber of Commerce
Liberal Party of Newfoundland and
Labrador
McGrath, R.T.
Murphy, Gérard
Nesbitt, Doug
New Democratic Party of Newfoundland &
Labrador
Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of
Community Youth Councils
Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of
Municipalities
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of
Labour
Newfoundland and Labrador Rural
Development Council
Newfoundland Association for Full
Employment
Newfoundland Medical Association
Newfoundland Teachers' Association
Paddock, Harold
Pennell, Cathy
Plaskin, Bob
Progressive Conservative Party of
Newfoundland and Labrador
Puxley, David
Roman Catholic School Board for St.
John's, The

Royal Canadian Legion — Newfoundland &
Labrador Command
Sheppard, Howard
St. John's Board of Trade
Story, George
Whalen, Hugh

Toronto

Accent Canada
Amdur, Reuel S.
Amprimo, Alexandre L.
Ashley, Brad
Association Canadienne-française de
l'Ontario (L')
Association des enseignants Franco-
Ontariens (L')
Association française de London
Association française des conseils
scolaires de l'Ontario (L')
Association of Canadian Television and
Radio Artists
Association of Franco-Ontarian Youth
Association of United Ukrainian Canadians
Atkey, Ron
Atta, Paul
Bank of Nova Scotia
Bénéteau, Aurèle R.
Berman, Joseph
Better Business Bureau of Canada, The
Black Liaison Committee
Black Resources and Information Centre
Board of Education for the Borough of
Scarborough, The
Board of Trade of Metropolitan
Toronto, The
Bousquet, Jacques J.
Cana-Kits
Canadian Arab Friendship Society of
Toronto, The
Canadian Association for Adult Education
Canadian Association in Support of the
Native Peoples, The — Toronto chapter
Canadian Federation of University
Women, The
Canadian Parents for French — Ontario
Canadian Pensioners Concerned Inc. —
Ontario Division
Canadian Polish Congress, Inc.
Canadian Polish Research Institute, The
Canadian Soft Drink Association
Centre d'activités françaises

- Charbonneau, Henri
- Chartier, Yves
- Chasse Galerie (La)
- Choquette, Robert
- Clackett, B., Mr. and Mrs.
- Collège Universitaire de Hearst (Le)
- Collier, Margaret
- Comité d'action francophone
- Commitment Canada/Engagement Canada
- Committee for A New Constitution, The — Steering Committee
- Conseil de la vie française en Amérique (Le)
- Coordinated Services to Jewish Elderly Corporation of the Borough of Scarborough, The
- Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, The
- Corporation of the City of Sudbury
- Corporation of the Town of Kapuskasing, The
- Corporation of the Town of Whitby, The
- Council for Franco-Ontarian Affairs
- Council of Ontario Universities
- Crown Life Insurance Company
- Curtis, Bert E.
- Daschko, Alex
- Davis, William G., premier of Ontario
- Dennie, Donald
- Dionne, Martin
- Downtown Business Council of Toronto
- Drake International
- Ecole Georges Vanier
- Ecole secondaire Charlebois — Comité d'action française
- Ecole secondaire La Citadelle
- Essex County French Secondary School — Action Committee
- Estonian Federation of Canada
- Federation of Catholic Education Associations of Ontario
- Federation of Chinese Canadian Professionals — Ontario
- Federation of French Canadian Women, The
- Federation of Unity and Related Groups of Ontario, The
- Francophone Action Committee
- German-Canadian Club Harmony
- Godbout, Arthur
- Godfrey, Paul V.
- Groupe d'action pour la bilinguisation des cours de justice à Sudbury
- Guay, Réjeanne
- Guindon, Roger
- Gulf Oil Canada Limited
- Hancock, Sydney
- Hewliitt, Alex
- Holloway, Peg
- Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, The
- Isabelle, Laurent
- Kenora, Town of
- Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto
- Landis, G.B.
- Larabie, Pauline
- Lawrence, William
- Leury, Madeleine
- Levy, Herbert S.
- Lithuanian Canadian Community
- Living and Learning in Retirement — Glendon College
- Llanos, Marc A.
- London, City of
- Lortie, Roland
- Mandel, Eli
- Masaryk Memorial Institute
- McFadden, Fred
- Morse, Jerry
- Movement for Canadian Literacy
- Multicultural Centre Association of Toronto
- Multicultural Council of Windsor & Essex County
- Murray, Donna
- National Congress of Italian Canadians
- Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, The
- Non-partisan Committee for Canadian Unity Through Diversity
- Norcia, Vincent di
- Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism
- Ontario Chamber of Commerce
- Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- Ontario Federation of Labour
- Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association
- Ontario Métis and Non-status Indian Association, The
- Ontario New Democrats, NDP
- Ottawa Herold
- Ottawa-Carleton, Regional Municipality of
- Pellerin, Charles

Appendix D

Pelletier, Pierre
Perron, Roselyne
Plourde, J.A. — archbishop of Ottawa
Queen's University
Quilan, Don
Ready Mixed Concrete Association of Ontario
Richard, Andrew
Richelieu Club — Toronto
Richer, Paulette E.
Ritchie, Ronald S.
Second Mile Club, The — Toronto
Selinger, Alphonse D.
Shanahan, Patricia
Sheridan College
Shuman, J.R.
Smith, Penny
Smith, Stuart — leader of the Ontario opposition
St-Cyr, Micheline
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Sudbury Regional Multicultural Centre
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Toronto Multicultural Centre Association — Pro-Canada Committee
Ukrainian Canadian Committee — Ottawa Branch
Ukrainian Canadian Committee — Toronto Branch
Ukrainian Canadian Magazine
Ukrainian Professional and Business Club of Toronto
United Automobile Workers
United Senior Citizens of Ontario, The
United Steelworkers of America
University of Ottawa
University Women's Club of North York, The
Urban Development Institute of Canada
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Windsor, City of

Vancouver

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Alliance, The
Apedaile, W.M.
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B.C. Provincial Committee of the Communist Party
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Barrigar, Robert H.
Beck, Dr. Douglas
Bennett, Robert W.
Bennett, Premier William
Board of School Trustees of School District 39, The (Vancouver)
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British Columbia Human Rights Council, The
Brotherhood of B.C. Indians
Canada United/Canada Uni
Canadian Hostelling Association — B.C. Region
Canadian Parents for French, B.C. Chapter
Canadian Protestant League
Catholic School Trustees' Association (B.C.)
Centre culturel colombien
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Chinese Core Working Group, Sexsmith Community school
Club Canadien-français de Victoria, (Le)
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Committee of Delta University Women's Club
Conseil de la coopération de la Colombie-Britannique
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Concerned Group of West Coast Canadians, A
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Hanan, E.M. and Easingwood, V.

Heather, William
 Henderson, Bertha
 Hollin, Ray
 Humphreys, Derrick
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 Information Department of the Canadian
 Esperanto Association
 Inter-Cultural Association of Greater
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 Johnson, Richard
 Kehoe, John
 Killeen, Jim
 Lawton, Dean and Liden, David
 Lorimer, Rowland
 Loughheed Town Community Association
 Lysyk, K.
 MacDonald, Alex B.
 MacDonald, Don
 MacPherson, James C.
 Mains, Geoffrey
 Manley-Casimir, Michael E.
 McAllister, Kenneth
 McNicoll, André
 McNulty, Jean
 McWhinney, Edward
 Moore, Nina
 Pearce, Marnee
 Postma, John F.
 Progressive Pakistan Canada Friendship
 Society
 Quebec Educational and Defence
 Committee
 Retail Merchants Association of Canada —
 B.C. Division
 Roman Catholic Bishops of B.C.
 Rombout, Luke (director of Vancouver Art
 Gallery)
 Sara, Harkirpal Singh
 Save Canada Committee
 Scott, John S.
 Seved, James
 Seymour, I.R.
 Shepard, Merrill W.
 Southin, C.
 Southwood, H.T.
 St. Andrew's-Wesley Church
 St. Pierre, Paul
 Stark, Marvin N.
 Stead, Gordon W.
 Stott, Adrian

Till, Ken
 Totemland Warrior Society
 Union of British Columbia Municipalities
 United Church of Canada, The
 University Hill Elementary School — Grade
 7 Students
 University Women's Club of
 Vancouver, The
 Vancouver Board of Trade, The
 Vancouver Centre New Democratic Party
 Federal Riding Association
 Vancouver Citizenship Council
 Vancouver Multicultural Society of B.C.
 Waverley School Consultative Committee
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 Westerners for Canadian Unity
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Whitehorse

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 Association of Yukon Municipalities
 Atamanenko, Alex
 Clegg, Mike
 Council for Yukon Indians, The
 Council of the Yukon Territory, The
 Des Lauriers, Dale
 Gryba, Walter A.
 Houlton, Michael John
 Kiwanis Club of Whitehorse, The
 Knights of Columbus
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 Development for the Yukon
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 Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
 Yukon Council on the Status of Women
 Yukon Hostelling Association, The
 Yukon Native Brotherhood
 Yukon Visitors Association

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Association des commissaires d'écoles de
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 Ball, R. Bruce
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Canadian Parents for French, Winnipeg branch
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 Federal Liberal party of Manitoba
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 Government of Manitoba, The
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 Manitoba Environmental Council
 Manitoba Farm Bureau
 Manitoba Federation of Labour, The
 Manitoba Indian Brotherhood
 Manitoba Pool Elevators
 Manitoba Teachers' Society, The
 Manitoba Women's Institute
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 Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
 Winnipeg Jewish Community Council

Yellowknife

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 Athabaskan Language Steering Committee, Fort Simpson
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 Bell, Rhonda — Sir John Franklin High School
 Collinson, Kelly
 Commissioner of the Northwest Territories
 Davies, Rob — Sir John Franklin High School
 Emery, Sheila
 Eskimo Point Inuit Cultural Institute
 Irwin, Doug — Sir John Franklin High School
 Korchuk, Nigel
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 Northwest Teachers' Association
 Northwest Territories Chamber of Mines
 Northwest Territories Construction Association
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Acknowledgements

The Commissioners wish to extend special thanks to the following persons who served on the Task Force staff and contributed particularly to this publication.

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The Task Force wishes to thank the following for their generosity and cooperation in providing photographs and cartoons: Abitibi Paper Company, Ltd., Toronto; Calgary Albertan Randall Hill; Calgary Herald; CP Picture Service, Toronto; Canada Wide Feature Services Ltd., Montreal; Charlottetown Guardian (Gordon Craswell); Le Devoir, Montréal; La Fédération des francophones hors Québec; Halifax Chronicle-Herald (Wamboldt-Waterfield); John Evans Photo, Ltd., Ottawa; Journal de Montréal (Gilles Lafrance); Legion Magazine, Ottawa (Noreen Young); Moncton Times and Transcript; Montreal Gazette; Montreal Star; National Indian Brotherhood; Ottawa Citizen; Regina Leader Post; Toronto Globe and Mail; Toronto Star Syndicate; La Tribune, Sherbrooke; Vancouver Sun; Winnipeg Free Press (Gerry Cairns); Winnipeg Tribune.





